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Transylvania County
West District

NCACC Youth Summit

The county commissioner I interviewed was Mr. Larry Chapman. He is the vice chairman of the Transylvania County commissioners. He is also on the board for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. When I attended a commissioners' meeting before serving as the youth delegate to the Youth Summit, he and Commissioner Mike Hawkins recognized me and told the audience how the Youth Summit helps young people learn how county government works.

When we first met, I did not know what to expect, but what I got was some good knowledge. Mr. Chapman told me what it was like to be a commissioner for the county. He explained about how the county makes its revenue. He said that when he ran for office in 2010, he really enjoyed getting out in the county and meeting with many different people to learn about their hopes and needs.

Mr. Chapman told me how he was in the marines and how he worked in the Ecusta paper mill for 27 years. As we talked, I discovered that we had a lot of things in common. For example, he was in the military and I am taking ROTC. He graduated from Brevard High School where I am a student. We also have some of the same views on the effect of the alcohol industry on our county.

In my conversation with Commissioner Chapman we discussed several community issues that are important to me. One issue is the possibility that our two high schools may be merged. Our schools are big rivals, but if we merged, we could have better sports teams and more courses offered. Mr. Chapman said a big part of the budget goes to schools, but the commissioners don't have any say about what is taught or how it's taught. They only have a say over the buildings. Another issue is that we don't have enough good jobs. We had an in depth conversation about bringing industry to the county. We talked about the influx of tourists riding bicycles in the county and the positive and negative effects of them being on the road. I suggested that we should get a bike building company to set up a factory so people could buy bikes built in the place they like to ride. I also had an idea that we should log more in the county and have a factory to make wood products. Mr. Chapman said there are positive and negative effects of most any idea, and how the commissioners have to "look at the other side of the coin" to take in everyone's view. He said that logging and wood products would provide more jobs, but a lot of people don't want any trees cut and the tourists wouldn't come if we cut our forests. We talked about the infrastructure that needs to be replaced, like water/sewer lines and bridges.

I had a good time listening to Mr. Chapman's stories: we related on being country boys. He shared how this county shaped him and his life. He gave me advice about working hard in school so I can reach my goal of becoming a chef or an engineer and told me that I should run for county commissioner in the future. I feel that he is really concerned with the county's well being and he wants to see this county at its best like it was when he was a kid. He is a wise old spirit that has so much wisdom to still give to the youth of the county.