

My name is Collin Eten. I'm sixteen years old and I live in Burnsville NC, Yancey County. I am in a 4-H club called FIRST (finding intelligent responsible solutions together). The main focus of our club is community service/involvement with a special emphasis on youth. Every month at WKYK, our local radio station, we make public service announcements and interview people who are offering services or doing something good for our community. At Youth Summit 2015, I will learn more about how local government works, which will inspire me to stay active and get involved in my community. I can then encourage others to do the same.

To prepare for this summit, I began by going to a county commissioners meeting on June 8. The main issue of the meeting was moving voting polls to fire stations. There was much discussion about the topic, and the firemen had valid concerns. Other issues were brought up in the meeting as well, such as: one man's opinion on how the police have handled/mishandled a specific investigation, a strong opinion that the commissioners are against the people, and how a county project would infringe on someone's property. Also during the meeting, volunteerism awards were given for the county, one youth and one adult. A fellow 4-H FIRST member, Hope Robinson, received this well-deserved award for many hours of community service. All in all, the meeting was very interesting and informative.

I then interviewed Randy Ollis – current member of the Board of County Commissioners, Yancey County. He has run five times for this office and served three terms: 1996-98, 2000-02, and 2012-16. As an EMS paramedic, Randy saw a need for enhanced 911 service in this rural area. When he approached the county to make this happen and was not successful in his efforts, he saw a better way to make his voice heard: he would run for County Commissioner himself. He campaigned successfully for both the office and for better 911 service. When asked what the biggest issue on the commissioners' plate is at present, Ollis replied without hesitation, "No question the annual budget." One thing I personally found interesting in our talk was about the distribution of funds. Randy talked about causes/services asking for money from the county, and having to weigh their decisions based on how much revenue they could receive and the worthiness of the cause. He said those decisions are at times difficult to make.

I was encouraged by this interview and look forward to being inspired more at Youth Summit 2015. Thank you.