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MACHE Legislative Training Days 2013

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On a brisk, chilly Thursday at the end of January, 44 students and parents gathered in the State Office Building for MÂCHÉ's Annual Legislative Training Days event. This popular event, coordinated by former Representative and MÂCHÉ board member John Tuma and his wife Wendy, continues to be helpful to students in learning the legislative process and how a bill becomes a law in Minnesota.

MÂCHÉ would like to thank their two legislative hosts, Representative Sondra Erickson and Senator Dan Hall. Representative Erickson greeted the students on Thursday morning, welcoming them to the Capitol and encouraging them to learn and observe much while at the Capitol. Senator Hall not only welcomed the students on Friday, but also willingly served as Chairman of the Student Mock Committee on Friday afternoon.

A significant event for us this year was a visit from Representative Anna Wills from Rosemount. Representative Wills is the first homeschool graduate to hold a legislative office. It was a treat to hear her talk about how she became involved in public service and her perspective now that she is in office.

This interactive event is always interesting and educational for the students as well as for the parents. John Tuma walks them through the legislative process, expecting feedback and interchange during his talk. By the end of Thursday morning, most of the students are beginning to grasp how things work at the Capitol.

Included in the first day is an insider's tour of the Capitol. Students and parents not only see the beauty of our beautiful State Capitol, but also visit committee hearings, observe the House and Senate floor sessions, and get a firsthand taste of the fast pace of the Capitol as they move from place to place. Participants are encouraged to arrange a meeting with their legislators prior to the event and it is not unusual for a visiting family to be invited to sit on the House floor during session at the invitation of their legislator.

Friday brings more information on the legislative process as we wrap up our discussion of how a bill becomes a law. Then comes the very popular Student Mock Committee, where students are the legislators working on a bill. The participants also visit the House floor, where the students get to debate the bill in the chamber, and "vote" and light up the board.

Students also get firsthand information on those who make things happen at the Capitol who are not legislators and how best to get involved. This year, we had three Capitol staffers -- all of them were homeschooled -- either speaking to the students or interacting with them .

Each and every participant leaves with a better understanding of the legislative process. Often those who had no interest in the process before leave with the realization that it is more interesting than it appears.

Our thanks once again to our assistants, Stephani and Abbie Liesmaki, Kali Schwartz, Amanda Hage, and Cal and Molly Tuma. We could not make this event a success without their able assistance.

We hope to see you next year at MACHE's Legislative Training Days event!

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