

Why A Million Is Not Enough



Carter Coudriet, NJ

Media Director

"Sit down and talk to somebody you've never met."

"Really get to know somebody you thought you knew in your delegation."

"Try to speak in debate, even if you're terrified."

"Experiment in a new part of media."

Chances are that, by the time you are reading this, you have heard at least one of these statements about what to do at the Conference on National Affairs. There are a million ways to try to find the "Blue Ridge Spirit" on the mountain, and I am sure I speak for many CONA veterans when I say that we returners want to help the newcomers feel all million of them.

However, as media delegate Sonay Barazesh writes in a different article in this edition of **The Blue Ridge Journal**, each CONA experience is different. This difference is not only derived from the change of year; rather, it is driven primarily by the incredibly diverse backgrounds, styles and goals of the delegates who join a family of thousands of prior guests on the mountain.

For this reason, I hope that every delegate, adviser, staffer and guest remembers this: There have been a million ways to experience the Blue Ridge Spirit, but what truly unlocks the power of conference is finding the 1,000,001st way.



MOUNTAIN. The Blue Ridge Assembly as seen from the mountaintop. Let the mountain move you.

PHOTO BY: Eriech Tapia, OK

There is so much about ourselves, our friends, our role models and beliefs that is buried by the real world. The reason CONA has been the most potent catalyst for growth in my own life is because I, who was admittedly just as skeptical about the existence of a "Blue Ridge Spirit" as one can be when I first came here, stopped working through CONA the way I thought it was "supposed" to be done and started letting the conference work through me.

Every delegate here — whether a debater, journalist, officer, Christian, Jew, Muslim, Northerner, Southerner, Westerner, young, old, new, experienced or coming from any other story — has the truly remarkable opportunity to grow here. Mountains are unmoving, but this one moved me, and I hope it moves you. ■

2015 Media Corps

Media Director: Carter Coudriet, NJ

Sonay Barazesh	New Jersey	Jack Densmore	Texas	Benjamin Hearn	Oklahoma
Brioshya Boyd	Indiana	Cassidy DeStefano	MUN (New Jersey)	Essence Jones	Indiana
Sonata Caric	Kentucky	James Farnsworth	Minnesota	Leah Schweibinz	North Carolina
Michelle Chung	Massachusetts	Sareena Fayaz	Pennsylvania	Amy White	Virginia
Olivia Cornforth	Oklahoma				

The Blue Ridge Journal

48th Annual YMCA Youth Conference on National Affairs

Sunday, June 28, 2015

POs Excited to Be Back on the Mountain



Leah Schweibinz, NC

Staff Writer

Our presiding officers for the 2015 YMCA Youth Conference on National Affairs have great expectations for this week. Prior to coming to the conference, **The Blue Ridge Journal** asked each of the six presiding officers about those expectations. Throughout the week, BRJ will help you get to know your presiding officers.



YOUR LEADERS. The 2015 presiding officers pose shortly after being announced last year. From left: Patrick Flanigan, Nicole Zatorski, Shantell Williams, Ben LaZebnik, Caroline Tervo and Ben Jackson

PHOTO BY: CONA College Staff Member Katzie Trusos, MN

PATRICK FLANIGAN

"I am very excited for my week on the Mountain. I am excited to see the delegates interact and enforce the rules laid out by our great Mountain Manual. I consider it a very high honor, and I hope to live up to the honor bestowed upon me."

BEN JACKSON

"I am really looking forward to what will be an uniquely special week. CONA is more than a government conference, it is a celebration of debate, fellowship, understanding and life-long memories. CONA is a time to reconnect with old friendships and forge new ones. I am so excited to have the opportunity to come back and serve

a conference that has meant so much to me and helped influence who I am today."

BEN LAZEBNIK

"Every presiding officer from my years as a delegate facilitated brilliant discussions on important issues. Moreover, they were able to set an inclusive, thoughtful and positive tone for our conference while still letting delegates take the lead. At the end of the day, it's all about doing what I can to make sure that everyone has the best possible experience. Knowing my fellow presiding officers, and knowing the types of people who attend CONA every year, it honestly shouldn't be too hard to help make great things happen at the Blue Ridge Assembly. I can't wait."

CAROLINE TERVO

"I'm so excited to be returning to the mountain for my fifth and final year. I hope I can help create a conference that will do justice to my own incredible experience, and I'm honored to have the chance to accomplish that with Ben, Ben, Patrick, Shantell and Nicole. They are all amazing people, and it is truly a privilege to serve with them."

SHANTELL WILLIAMS

"I'm going back to the Mountain as a PO, so I'm not frantically researching all the proposal topics I know nothing about, as I'm sure many of you are. The excitement and anticipation I've felt

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Ambassador Delegation Are Liaisons for New Youth in Government Programs



**Cassidy DeStefano,
MUN
Staff Writer**

This year, the mountain welcomes seven more state groups than last year, propelling the total state count to 40.

According to CONA program director Sam Adams, four states currently lacking YIG programs on their home turf will join together in a coalition called the Ambassador Delegation. The group will comprise students from Alaska, Utah, Nevada and Rhode Island.

"There are nine students in the Ambassador Delegation," Adams said. "The plan is for them to learn more about Youth in Government and go back home to work with their YMCA on establishing or reestablishing a program."

He added that the remaining 36 groups are divided into full and multi-state categories contingent upon how many delegates enroll. Multi-state groups contain fewer than five delegates and encompass Arizona, Colorado, Montana and Oregon.

Alaska, Nevada, and Utah are the newly christened delegations, while Colorado, Hawaii, Georgia and Rhode Island return after an absence. Distance and affordability helps to determine the medium that each respective delegation used to reach conference.

Adams added that the criteria for creating new delegations is simple. Ambassador Delegation exempt, the states seeking to attend must host a YMCA-sponsored Youth in Government program.

"There is no approval process on our end," he said.

The official website states that CONA delegates are handpicked from a pool of approximately 50,000 students that participate in YIG programs.

New states will be mentioned at opening ceremonies at the outdoor amphitheater, and will join in the procession of flags alongside long-standing delegations. ■

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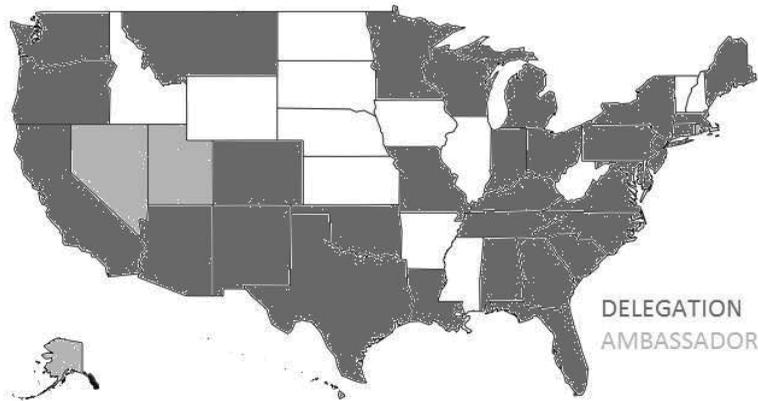
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EXPANDING. A total of 40 states will be represented at the 48th YMCA Conference on National Affairs. Alaska, Utah, Nevada and Rhode Island comprise the Ambassador Delegation. GRAPHIC BY: Media Director Carter Coudriet, NJ

Conference on National Affairs Is Different Every Year; What Will This Year Hold for You?



**Sonay Barazesh, NJ
Staff Writer**

For almost five decades, hundreds of delegates have gathered at the Blue Ridge Assembly to partake in the Conference on National Affairs. Any delegate who has attended CONA can vouch for the unique experience of this week, which includes iconic Eureka Treats, seersucker suits and the "Blue Ridge Spirit."

This year marks the 48th conference. Up to 25 delegates from each of 40 states will gather. A record 772 delegates and adults from all over the country are expected to be



in attendance this year.

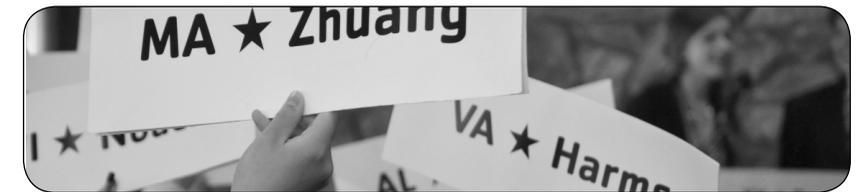
What makes CONA such a special experience is arguably the different delegates and world events each year.

New Jersey Youth Governor Nick Pellitta will be attending his third conference this year and feels that every CONA he has attended was unique. "The Blue Ridge Spirit manifests itself in different ways almost every year," he said. "Last year saw the World Cup going on during conference and being able to watch a USA game with a ton of other delegates and cheer together really brought us together."

Last year's conference was certainly memorable for Pellitta and many other delegates, but historically, there has been something

different about every year. For example, in 1988, a French delegation attended the conference and, in 1989, a Soviet delegation attended as well. Throughout the years, CONA has expanded to include a consistent Model United Nations delegation and District of Columbia delegation.

While this year's conference will make CONA history in its own unique way, some aspects of the mountain remain consistent year after year. As "Carolina in the Morning" plays at every crack of dawn and as delegates chat over Eureka treats, guests at the Blue Ridge Assembly know that the 48th year of conference will stay in the memory of delegates for years to come. ■



PO's Share Their Expectations for the Conference

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every year is the same. However, my focus has shifted to the experience of the delegates. I'm so excited to see you all forming new relationships, broadening your views and questioning others and yourself. Of course, I'm looking forward to the CONA pride, seeing delegates race (speed walk)

to the microphone and the placards of all those waiting to share raised high. There is also a healthy dose of nerves: I mean speaking in front of you all is not for the faint of heart!"

NICOLE ZATORSKI

"CONA has been a transformative experience for me. The sense of community and the Blue Ridge

Spirit not only enhanced my ability to debate, but also taught me the value of remaining open minded. I am really looking forward to serving the conference this year, and in doing so, helping others benefit from the wonderful experience that is CONA." ■