

From: Walter Banek <wrbanek@mac.com>
Subject: Tyler Morning Telegraph - NEWS - 03/03/2006 - <CENTER>TYLER DEBATER HEADED FOR NATIONALS</CENTER>
Date: March 12, 2006 9:15:57 AM CST
To: "Boonzaaij Rev. John & Christine" <jboonz@mac.com>

tylerpaper.com

03/03/2006

TYLER DEBATER HEADED FOR NATIONALS

By: PATRICK BUTLER, Religion Editor



DEBATING SHEPHERDS: Paul Shepard (foreground) joins (from left) Hannah Clanton, Taylor Jewell, Alina Dolzhenko, Matthew Butler, Katrina Volberding, Esther Shepard, Karla Clanton, Greg Hoyt, Jackie Gonzalez and Taylor Hoyt. (Staff Photo By David Branch)

Paul Shepard, 18, who dreams of one day arguing a case in front of the United States Supreme Court, gave himself poor odds because of his subject matter to be selected as a National Forensic League Finalist this June.

The junior at Good Shepherd School entered the district national qualifying tournament in Longview last week against several hundred East Texas students - some selected, as he was, for the "Student Congress," a division of the National Forensics Tournament - with a view to "have fun," he said Friday.

It turned out to be a good plan. Shepard won a spot in the finals, a tournament held in a different U.S. city each year.

"I was thrilled and surprised," said Shepard, who said the debate program at his school "changed my life." Shepard went into the Student Congress qualifier at Pine Tree High School with confidence, coupled with purpose, he said.

"I picked a favorite subject, on creationism, and since I knew there were evolutionists on the judging panel, I thought surely my speech would not go over well."

The five-minute speech, given in front of 25 competitors, three judges and observers, did a little bit of creating itself, he said.

"There was sort of an uproar in the room afterward, with the competitors talking with each other about the merits of creationism," he laughed. "But I got a spot at Nationals. It was a great moment."

Despite being the only speaker at the time, he said his victory was a "major debate-team effort."

"There is no way I could have done this without our debate team," Shepard said. "As a team, we research topics, then sit around, talk about it, frame arguments, challenge one another and give each other ideas. A good part of what I said in my speech was thinking that came from them. I just put it together."

He was relieved that the school's "proud legacy" in debate was preserved, Shepard said.

"Our team has made Nationals the last four years," he said. "I'm happy to continue that tradition. Debate changed my life, because it taught me how to put thought and reason behind my actions."

The 18-member high school student body at Good Shepherd is required to take debate as a part of its "classical education" curriculum, said the school's debate coach Sara Maynard, a family law attorney who volunteers her time with her husband, Roy, to coach the debate squad.

"This qualifying debate was a very high-stress affair with a lot of talented and very competitive kids, but Paul is such a good and well

thought-out speaker that when he speaks passionately about something, he's hard to beat," she said. "He has put in the background work, the research and attended debate tournaments every weekend from September to February and earned this recognition.

Mrs. Maynard didn't hear Shepard's speech.

"I was pacing up and down in the halls when he was on," she laughed. "I didn't want to do anything that would throw him off. I didn't have anything to worry about. The scripture that comes to mind with Paul is "Study to show yourself approved," and he has. His qualifying shows that."

Shepard had good words for his debate coaches.

"I don't think I could stress enough how blessed I am to have Mr. and Mrs. Maynard be my coaches. They are a huge support, they are the coaches."

Patrick Butler covers religion. email: religion@tylerpaper.com

Peltier  **NOW LOCATED AT
2700 WSW LOOP 323
AN AMERICAN REVOLUTION TYLER**

©Tyler Morning Telegraph 2006