

# Kennedy Strickler: Traveling, Learning and Leading

by Cammie Tutwiler, SVEC Writer

Some people travel during college, some after college and some later in life. For Page County High School junior Kennedy Strickler, who has consistently done things at a younger age than her peers, the time is now. Strickler, whose parents are Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative member-owners, was recently elected the national president of Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) at a conference held in Atlanta, and said her schedule is packed with constant travel.

In a sample of her plans for just half of one week, she met with the State Board of Education on Wednesday in Richmond, then met with state officers for Virginia in Salem and finally, met with the Virginia board of directors in Lexington.

"It's a lot of fun," Strickler said. "It keeps me busy and it keeps me going. I think that's what I like so much about it."

She joined FCCLA in seventh grade, an organization that "... helps young men and women become leaders and address important ... issues through family and consumer sciences education." She was elected to serve as state president in ninth grade — the youngest ever. The summer after 10th grade she ran for national office, and was elected national president, one of the youngest ever.

"When I tell people how young I am, I think it kind of blows their minds," she said with a laugh.

Her family and consumer sciences teacher, Bobbi Comer, saw the unique leadership capabilities early in Strickler.

"I saw that in Kennedy in the ninth grade when she took my class for the first time," Comer said. "When she decided she wanted to run for a state FCCLA officer position, I had no doubt she would be successful."

Comer added that they prepared her to interview for all positions, including the president, thinking it would be a good experience if she wanted to run again.

"The nominating committee chose her as the state president as a sophomore over juniors and seniors, and that put her in the unusual position to run for national office

this past summer as a rising junior," she said.

The national election took place during a five-day leadership event, held from June 28-July 2 in Atlanta. She was one of 10 national officers elected during the conference.

"In Kennedy's role as national president, she will represent the national organization to members across the country, policy makers, education officials and business partners," Comer said.

Travel is one of the things that drew Strickler to the organization.

"The fact that I could go to all of the places across the U.S. and meet all of these people who are so passionate and such strong leaders really inspired me," she said.

In another part of her new role, she will help set policies and develop future goals for the organization, in addition to leading workshops and giving speeches locally and throughout the country.

"I've noticed a big change in myself due to participation in the organization," Strickler said. "I used to be shy, but here I am doing an interview, and I'm comfortable. I can talk to political leaders, and I'm OK with it."

Comer said she has seen a change in Strickler as well.

"Kennedy has become a remarkable leader, who is not afraid to speak up and give her opinions on the direction of the organization," she said. "She is now able to confidently interact with adults, manage her time wisely and balance her responsibilities between school work, FCCLA and other extracurricular activities."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KENNEDY STRICKLER

Strickler with her gavel for being national FCCLA president. She signed her name in the box, along with the last several members at the FCCLA Headquarters in Reston, Virginia.

Though she has just begun her journey as national president, she said her favorite part so far is getting to know the other nine people whom she is serving with on the council.

"Seeing what everyone brings to the table that I'm serving with is exciting," she said. "It's going to be a really good year for us."

Strickler works hard in FCCLA and in her schoolwork, where she is taking four dual-enrollment courses in governor's school, and two additional dual-enrollment courses this semester at Page County High School.

"I've learned tons of time-management skills and how to get everything done through FCCLA," she said. "My teachers

are super supportive. Having a supportive school system is so helpful.”

Strickler added that her family is very supportive as well.

“I’ve been living out of a suitcase this last month,” she said. “I am away from home a lot, but my family knows I am doing something I love, so they are very supportive.”

This year, she said she’s headed to Texas, California and New York. First she will visit Louisville, Kentucky, in November for a cluster meeting.

“It’s one of my favorites because it’s small and it’s a good opportunity to network with other FCCLA members,” she said. “You make friends from across the country.”

Strickler serves on both the national FCCLA board of directors and the Virginia FCCLA board of directors as one of the youth representatives.



Left: Clockwise from left, Kennedy Strickler, Madison Comer and Bobbi Comer, the FCCLA teacher and Madison’s mother. Madison is a 2018 graduate of Page County High School and was the National Parliamentarian for the 2017-’18 year. Right: Strickler speaking with Sen. Tim Kaine, when she presented at the Senate Career and Technical Education (CTE) Caucus Reception in Washington, D.C., in March.



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