

Texas Bluebonnet Girls State Report
Submitted by the American Legion Auxiliary
Girls State Chairman Sandi Schendel
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We would like to gratefully thank the **New Braunfels Evening Lions Club** for your long-time, generous support of our Girls State Program. Through your grant, we were able to give three high school juniors a life-changing experience. They are **Abby Sciantarelli, Christina Torrez and Eleanor Dorsey** all from **John Paul II High School**. Your funding has covered program costs and assured counselors that they could confidently promote this opportunity, knowing that support was available. You have been a vital part of our success and have helped us sustain and strengthen our program, empowering young ladies to grow as leaders and engaged citizens

Your generosity reflects a shared belief in the importance of leadership development and civic education for our young ladies. We deeply value our long-standing partnership with you and the trust you have placed in the impact of the Girls State Program. We are forever grateful for your commitment to shaping future leaders and look forward to partnering with you again next year. Thank you.

Who governs our organization – the American Legion Auxiliary?

We are governed by National <https://www.alpost179tx.org/american-legion-auxiliary> and our Department of Texas <https://alatexas.org/>. Our local website is and link to our officers is <https://www.alpost179tx.org/american-legion-auxiliary>.

View our **Mission Statement** and **Values** at <https://member.legion-aux.org/about/mission>

Our Mission Statement: In the spirit of Service, Not Self, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both at home and abroad. For God and Country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace and security.” It can be found at: <https://member.legion-aux.org/about/mission>

Our statement of values is predicated on the founding purposes:

- Commitment to the four founding principles: Justice, Freedom, Democracy, Loyalty
- Service to God, our country, its veterans and their families
- Tradition of patriotism and citizenship
- Personal integrity and family values
- Respect for the uniqueness of individual members
- Truthful open communication in dealing with the public and our members
- Adherence to the adopted policies and rules

What are the benefits of Girls State?

Girls State is an intensive, immersive program where girls live and breathe city, county and state government 24/7 for a week. Your Citizens were taught responsible citizenship, leadership, service, responsibility and love of country as well as the art of civil debate and how our government works. Citizens, who possessed these skills, refined and perfected them even further through this experience.

We have had positive feedback every year where our Citizens described their experiences as impactful, life-changing, educational, rewarding, worthwhile, fantastic and fun. Girls State completely reshapes their perspectives on government with many stating they want to go into politics or public service. The Citizens also inspire and encourage others in their schools to attend Girls State.

Our high school counselors describe how these young ladies return their senior year different young ladies, excited, challenged and more confident. They become more involved in their schools as well as outside activities. They eagerly share their experiences with others.

Many Citizens belong to organizations in their communities such as civic, sports, non-profit, religions and others where they will use the knowledge and skills to better serve these organizations and educate fellow members.

Other benefits include broadening Citizens' knowledge of government; learning about civic responsibilities to include citizen and civil responsibilities; instilling a deeper sense of citizenship, pride and patriotism; sharpening their debate and collaboration skills; emboldening them to take part in new experiences, gaining more self-confidence, and forming life-long friends with which they can network and collaborate with.

We believe many Citizens will go on to work in local, state or national governments and/or civic jobs as well as join the military and service organizations. They will become advocates for their communities and the less fortunate through their service. Former Girls State Citizens include Governor Ann W. Richards, Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander, Judge Court of Criminal Appeals Bea Ann Smith, and former Assistant District Attorney for Harris County Lori Swann, Girls State Director.

We believe these confident young ladies are special, they are achievers, and they want to make a difference. They will make a significant impact on anyone or any organization they join and will reach any goal they strive for.

The program for our annual Girls State Reception.

**American Legion Auxiliary Girls State Orientation
Saturday, May 10, 2025 3:00 pm
Walton F. Hoffmann Memorial American Legion Post 179**

Welcome

Auxiliary President Mary Jane Repp

What is Girls State?

Girls State Chairman Sandi Schendel

Thank you to our counselors

John Paul II Catholic High School Director of Counseling Services
New Braunfels High School Career Center Advisor
Davenport High School Academic and Career Advisor
Smithson Valley High School Academic and Career Advisor

Girls State Chairman Sandi Schendel

Dr. Sherry Garrett, Ph.D., CSC, LPC
Jenise Horner
Kayla Beyer
Lauren Kiesling

Presentation of Girls State Citizens and their Sponsors Jane Repp

Sandi Schendel and President Mary

New Braunfels Evening Lions Club

President Paul Drush

Abby Sciantarelli John Paul II Catholic High School
Christina Torrez John Paul II Catholic High School
Eleanor Dorsey John Paul II Catholic High School

Parents

Brian and Karen Sciantarelli
John and Susie Torrez
Tyler and Joleen Dorsey

Rotary Club of New Braunfels

President Lindsay Haas

Haiden Hammac John Paul II Catholic High School
Miriam Rosales John Paul II Catholic High School
Zoie James John Paul II Catholic High School

Parents

Justin and Kimberlee Hammac
Raul and Stephanie Rosales
Angela James

Garden Ridge Lions Club

President Ray Price

Abigael Rogers Davenport High School
Greenley Lemmons Davenport High School
Madylyn Danielle Munoz Davenport High School

Parents

Taylor and Ashley Rogers
Mark and Brittany Lemmons
Robert and Esmeralda Munoz

Downtown Rotary Club of New Braunfels

President Stephen Hanz

Alexa Glebus Davenport High School
Natalie Drichta Davenport High School
Marisa Bowers Smithson Valley High School

Parents

Geoffrey and Jessica Glebus
David and Shannon Drichta
Patricia Bowers

American Legion Riders

Director Bill Reed

Jocelyn Aguilar-Salazar New Braunfels High School
Jordyn Lehr New Braunfels High School
Reagan Muenchow Smithson Valley High School
Brielle Jang Smithson Valley High School

Parents

Israel Aguilar and Natali Salazar
Sarah Smithers
Jeff and Amber Muenchow
Jeannie Jang

Texas Bluebonnet Girls State

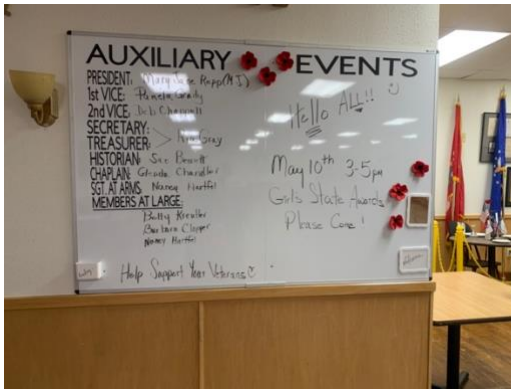
Director Lori Swan

Karli Kennedy Nimmo Smithson Valley High School
Reece Plake Smithson Valley High School

Parents

Spencer and Kayla Nimmo
Lindsay Plake

Here are a few photos from our Girls State Reception held May 10, 2025.



We post our Auxiliary officers and events in our American Legion Hall and online at the post website at <https://www.alpost179tx.org/> for all to see, including those who rent our hall and visit our bar and lounge. Our Post Home serves as home to the American Legion Auxiliary, American Legion, Sons of the American Legion and the Legion Riders where we host patriotic and community events.



Left is our reception sign in and program with photos from Chairman Sandi Schendel's attendance at Girls State. She stayed in City G – Galahad's Grotto. President Lyndon Baines Johnson and Ladybird made a special appearance and warmly welcomed Citizens to Texas Bluebonnet Girls State. Center are the certificates of appreciation and letters of gratitude that were presented to Citizens, Counselors and Sponsors. (Far right) Photo shows display of Past Auxiliary Presidents and awards.



Our members (center) provided delicious homemade snacks and drinks for reception attendees.



(Left) Citizens, family, counselors, sponsors and Auxiliary members enjoy the presentations. (Center) Citizens Greenley Lemmons and Christina Torrez. (Right) Two members of the Legion Riders who sponsored four girls to Girls State enjoy snacks and conversation.



President Mary Jane Repp (in purple) and Girls State Chairman Sandi Schendel explain what Girls State is and answer questions prior the award presentations.

Our high school counselors play a vital and important role in our Girls State Program, providing immeasurable assistance and maintaining constant contact with us and their students throughout the process. They provide interested students with information on Girls State and distribute our application; some counselors nominate students for the program they feel exhibit character, citizenship and leadership. This year one Smithson Valley Counselor Lauren Kiesling contacted Girls State Director Lori Swan and solicited scholarships for two of her students we were unable to sponsor. We could not do it without our counselors.

This year we worked with four wonderful counselors: Director of Counseling Services Dr. Sherry Garrett, Ph.D. from John Paul II Catholic High School, College and Career Advisor Jenise Horner with New Braunfels High School, Academic and Career Advisor Kayla Beyer with Davenport High School and Smithson Valley High School Academic and Career Advisor Lauren Kiesling.



President Mary Jane and Chairman Sandi present certificates of support for our Girls State Citizenship Training Program to (Left) Lauren Kiesling from Smithson Valley High School and (Right) Dr. Sherry Garrett at John Paul II Catholic High School.

Recognizing sponsors' generosity and support of our Girls State Program is paramount because their funding through grants results in a successful program, that affords this worthy, educational opportunity to many more young high school juniors than we could support alone.



President Mary Jane and Chairman Sandi present a certificate of appreciation and support to members of the Evening Lions Club of New Braunfels represented by members Roslyn and Jim Evens (Center) and Edward Nolte, Jr. (Far Right)



(Left) Good Citizenship Citation certificates are presented to Citizen Eleanor Dorsey (Left, yellow dress) and Citizen Christina Torrez (Center, blue dress) along with their sponsors New Braunfels Evening Lions Club members. (Photo Right) Chairman Sandi presents a Good Citizenship Citation certificate to Christina Torrez.



(Left) President Mary Jane and Chairman Sandi present a certificate of appreciation and support to the American Legion Riders with Post 179. (Right) Their Girls State Citizen Jocelyn Aguilar-Salazar receives a Good Citizen Citation from President Mary Jane and Chairman Sandi.



President Mary Jane thanks member of the American Legion Riders for their sponsorship of four young ladies to Girls State.



(Left) President Mary Jane and Chairman Sandi present a Good Citizen Citation to Abigail Rodgers who is sponsored by the Downtown Rotary Club of New Braunfels. (Right) Citizens Greenley Lemmons and Abigail Rodgers receive their certificates; both sponsored by the Downtown Rotary Club of New Braunfels.



President Mary Jane and Chairman Sandi present a Good Citizen Citation to Reese Plake who was provided a scholarship by Bluebonnet Girls State Director Lori Swan.



Members of our American Legion Auxiliary, Walton F. Hoffmann Memorial Unit 179, pose together after our successful Girls State reception. We wished the Citizens all success and lots of fun in their endeavors, reminding them to contact their sponsors following Girls State to attend a meeting and share their experiences.

Texas Bluebonnet Girls State was held Saturday, June 15 through Friday, June 21, 2025 on the campus of Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas. Because of the generosity of our sponsors, 18 young women from four high schools – John Paul II Catholic High School, Davenport High School, New Braunfels High School, and Smithson Valley High School - were able to have the experience of Girls State. These girls were among more than 600 high school juniors from throughout the state who experienced government first hand by taking part in mock city, county and state governments and belonging to either the Federalist or Nationalist Party. Our Citizens were also members of the Senate or House of Representatives. They formed their city, county and state governments, campaigned for office, and wrote and debated bills. 100 volunteers, many former Girls Staters and members of the American Legion Auxiliary conducted the program. The following photos were submitted by some of our Citizens. Included also are statements on how Girls State impacted them.

Thank you again for giving Citizens this wonderful, educational and fun opportunity.



(Left) 600 Citizens and 100 staff gather to take the traditional “Big Texas” photo during the 81st Session of Girls State. (Right) Citizens from John Paul High School pose on the campus of Texas Lutheran University.

One Citizen from John Paul II Catholic High School Citizens stated: *“I had a wonderful time and it was truly a life changing experience! I learned so much about our government that I wouldn’t have known if it hadn’t been for girls state! Thank you so much for sponsoring me to be able to attend Girls State, I will never forget your gift to me.”*



(Left and Right) More of our Citizens from Smithson Valley High School pose during a general assembly.



(Left) Our Citizen from John Paul II Catholic High Schools gives her speech as she runs for Vice Chair of the Federalist party. (Right). She submits her bill during a session of the Senate.

As to how Girls State impacted her, she stated *"Girls State impacted me by giving me the passion to want to participate in my community and to push me to stand up for what I believe is right."*



(Left) A Citizen from Davenport High School stands above the Senate Floor in the Texas Capitol Building.

As far as how Girls State impacted her, she stated *"Texas Bluebonnet Girls State gave me a sincere community of young women who are just as passionate and committed to helping others and pursuing education as I am, which was a unique experience that I will never forget!"*



(Left) A Davenport High School Citizen states *"This is a photo of me and my friends from city E crossing the street excitedly on the way to listen to guest speakers!"* (Right) She poses with newly made friends In the House of Representatives at the Texas Capitol! She was a member of the House.

This Citizen excitedly commented: *"Texas Blue Bonnet Girls State has ignited my flame of passion to pursue a career in politics. I entered girls state only slightly curious of our government and how it works. Surprisingly after just one week at Girls State, I left with a mission to not only work in our government, but to better it as well!"*



A Smithson Valley student (Left) meets with the Speaker of the House following the adjournment of the legislative session. She stated the Speaker helped her a lot during the week to gain confidence in speaking which led to her successfully introducing her bill. (Right) This is a group photo of her City N family who she described as incredibly intelligent and kind women; these and other women is what made Girls State what it is. She will never forget what an inspiration her fellow citizens were.

In describing what an impact Girls State made on her, she stated *“Girls state completely changed my view on how American citizens should interact with the government and how important it is to speak out for what you believe in.”* She was grateful to her sponsor for this incredible opportunity.

And soon, their week at Girls State was over much too quickly and the Citizens headed home. When they return to their respective high schools this fall, they will tell others about their experiences and what they learned about government. They will share the fun and excitement of the week, the many new friends they made and how they grew and gained more confidence.



The following pictures were taken from "The Bluebonnet Blog" on the Girls State website with paraphrased daily activities at <https://www.girls-state.org/>



June 15, 2025 over 600 young ladies from every part of Texas arrived at Girls State, inspired and ready to take part. They were greeted by almost 100 volunteer staff; many were past Girls State Citizens and members of the American Legion Auxiliary. They are experienced and well-trained leaders of young women who are recognized in their communities. Junior Counselors are past Girls State Citizens. Citizens were assigned as residents of 15 cities, City A through O, each staffed with 1 senior and 2 junior counselors.

Comments from arriving Citizens: City D resident stated *"Being here is important to me so I can learn more about our Texas government and find ways that I can be more involved in my community."*

City A resident stated she's *"excited to learn how to connect with other people and broaden my horizons as a young woman."*

During City Day Citizens were greeted in their first speaker series by the **Honorable Donna Dodgen, Mayor of Seguin**, who spoke of her memories at Girls State. She stated "The things I learned about government, about service, about friendship, *I learned as a citizen at Girls State.*"



American Legion Auxiliary Department President Sharon Phelps encouraged Citizens stating "Your voice matters, your ideas are valued, and you're a part of something very, very special. You are not just the leaders of tomorrow; you are leaders now."

Also during the general assembly, staff members President of the Senate Claire Noel and the Speaker of the House Sofi Udawala, announced Floor leaders in the Senate and House from the Federal and National Parties with representatives from Cities J, L, M and F. Citizens headed for their cities where they drafted charters and began to file for city offices, as well as participated in their first legislative session as members of either the Senate or House. The day completed, elections were held in all 15 cities.



The first flag raising ceremony took place this morning where Citizens marched to the flag pole, raised the American and Texas flags, and recited pledges to the United States and Texas. Citizens were busy preparing their campaigns, filing for their chosen office, and involved in discussions with their non-political parties.

Citizens to initiate debates and introduce legislation. They also learned the proper parliamentary procedures to debate their positions.

Filing for county, state and Federal/National party offices began with a record number of Citizens filing.

In the cities precinct and county party chairs elections were held. Campaign materials lined the dorm halls and walls. As Party Day ended election results were given at State Party meetings.

During State Party elections, staffer Kalea Grant, National Party sponsor, stated "I've always felt that Party Day is the first day that citizens really embrace Girls State and feel empowered by those around them." Our Federal Party sponsor and staffer Callie Bekker, shared "Both Parties are the defining pillars of Girls State, and it allows the citizens to have a direct group that they can connect with. The built-in community of each Party gives the citizens the confidence to step out of their comfort zone and give in to the Girls State magic."

No whether Fed or Nat, red or blue, it was an exciting day. Congratulations to all elected State Party Officials.



Federal Party Members:

Party Chair – Aubri Cunningham, City O
Vice Chair – Kennedy Kaiser, City D
House Whip – Riya Sharma, City B
Senate Whip – Tylee Lewis, City K

National Party:

Party Chair – Valentina Doss, City C
Vice Chair – Riya Erasani, City K
House Whip – Kari Tobaben, City B
Senate Whip – Christy Chung, City N

The Federal and National Parties delivered their primary speeches during assembly. As Citizens returned to their cities to attend City Council meetings, and created their city ordinances, specific to each city. Lively campaigns took part in both parties for County and State offices.



Once again the Senate and House convened to take care of business. Committee Chairwomen reported on bills from their first reading, and both chambers held lively discussions with Citizens very confident and using the properly parliamentary procedures.

Each party broke out in their own Party chants and songs while runoff elections were held in both parties with winner announced in the evening. The energy was absolutely electric. Tomorrow brings candidate speeches from both parties as General Elections will be held.



Nominees for the Federal Party are:

Governor: Chloe Luo, City M
 Lieutenant Governor: Snehal Srishti, City D
 Attorney General: London Brooks, City L
 Comptroller of Public Accounts: Diya Patel, City J
 Land Commissioner: Lorelei Mitchell, City E
 Agriculture Commissioner: Madeline Kilgore, City M
 Railroad Commissioner: Kate Fambrough, City C
 Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals: Cynthia Zimin, City E
 Chief Justice of the Supreme Court: Khyati Singh, City J



Nominees for the National Party are:

Governor: Aarna Sreenivas, City C
 Lieutenant Governor: Mae Spijkerman, City A
 Attorney General: Marlee Fraser, City F
 Comptroller of Public Accounts: Arnavi Jain, City I
 Land Commissioner: Grace Dong, City J
 Agriculture Commissioner: Addy Moore, City G
 Railroad Commissioner: Faith Presley, City L
 Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals: Noa Vasquez, City L
 Chief Justice of the Supreme Court: Sofia Berry, City N

**As great as the country is,
it could be so much greater
if we realized what could
be done together.**

– Opal Lee

Today Citizens attended an assembly today on President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation January 1, 1863, and Opal Lee, recognized as the mother of Juneteenth. She worked tirelessly for many years to make June 19th a federal holiday. At the age of 89 in 2016 she walked the 2 ½ miles daily to symbolize the 2/1/2 years between the Emancipation Proclamation and when news reached Galveston. She was honored by President Biden at the White House as he signed a bill designating Juneteenth a federal holiday. Her

activism continues to inspire many. She was quoted in a recent Texas Monthly profile stating *"As great as the country is, it could be so much greater if we realized what could be done together."* Who knows what these Girls State Citizens will be inspired to advocate for.

Today the Citizens submitted bills in the Senate and House followed by debates on a range of topics. Participants easily and fluently conducted debates with all Citizens now well-versed in parliamentary procedures. This was followed by state positions speeches from the National and Federal party nominees who delivered thoughtful and eloquent speeches to fellow Citizens.

During the Whistle Stop, Citizens could pose nominees questions for the state offices before voting began. Song leaders lead wonderful performances from each city where Citizens enthusiasm and talent were showcased as they sang their original city songs. Director Lori Swan closed the evening's session with Election Returns for the newly- elected officials who now represent the 51st state. Congratulations to all.



State General Election Results:

Governor: Chloe Luo

Lieutenant: Mae Spijkerman

Attorney General: Marlee Fraser

Comptroller of Public Accounts: Diya Patel

Land Commissioner: Lorelei Mitchell

Agriculture Commissioner: Madeline Kilgore

Railroad Commissioner: Kate Fambrough

Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals: Noa Vasquez

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court: Khyati Singh

Today Citizens took to the floors of the House and Senate for the 81st and final session in the State Capitol. Representatives and Senators debated special Senate and House bills and inaugurated all newly elected officials for the state.



On the final day of Girls State, Citizens assembled for the last time where Governor Chloe Luo of City M, addressed her citizens with her closing remarks. Lou stated that *"like many, I came into this week not thinking I'd be running for any state position — just here to have some fun and make new friends. Wow, was I wrong."* She commented that upon her arrival someone told her, *'Go big or go home' and she took the advice to heart. "I took that advice and RAN. If you're coming to Texas Girls State, the one thing that you must make sure that you do is leave with no regrets."*

The 81st session of Girls State was made possible because of the 100 dedicated and enthusiastic women from throughout the state and country who came together to make Girls State a reality. Unpaid volunteers comprised this great staff of volunteers who donated their energy, time and passion to make this session the greatest ever. Their dedication and selfless was recognized by the Citizens.

Director Lori Swann gave a few final remarks to the Citizens along with their families and friends who were in attendance. Citizens waited with baited breath as she announced those Citizens who would attend Girls National in Washington DC in July. They were Katherine Ramsey from City F and Lola Selberg from City H with alternates Kate Fambrough from City C and Snehal Srishti from City D.

Director Swan also announced one outstanding Citizen from each city. They are City A: Mae Spijkerman, City B: Kari Tobaben, City C: Aarna Sreenivas, City D: Snehal Srishti, City E: Lorelei Mitchell, City F: Abigail Arefeayne, City G: Azariah Rivens, City H: Lola Selberg, City I: Brianna Schmeis, City J: Jewel Morin, City K: Josephine Sun, City L: Lauren Whitmarsh, City M: Kylie Trexler, City N: Glory Palmer and City O: Meg Perry.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Citizens and staff hugged, wiping tears away but smiling as they were reflected on how their lives were now changed forever. These new alumni will go back to their schools and communities with the tools to make a difference in whatever they endeavor to do. Girls State has empowered them to successfully take on any challenge.

We want to end by once again thanking you for your generosity. We could not have given the Girls State experience to as many girls without your support. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted August 12, 2025 by

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