

Common Ground: Life of public service rings true for Bell

by chante warren • Apr 19, 2015 - 11:08 am

At 17, D'Wayne Bell II has made academics and community service a priority at his high school, where he is honing his skills for public service and leadership.

Since becoming president of the Louisiana Beta Club in January, the junior at Iberville Math, Science and Arts Academy-East in St. Gabriel is out to let teens know their opinions matter.

“An issue the youth of today needs to work on is getting involved and speaking their voice,” Bell said. “I know our voices and opinions are powerful, and they can be very impactful.”

His participation in Beta, the Student Government Association, Key Club, 4-H and the Spanish Club have primed him to be a strong public speaker, initiating school-wide campaigns and promoting student participation in his school and surrounding community.

“In Beta, I learned the fundamentals of leadership and the value of teamwork,” said the honor student.

With those tools, he wants to implement an online voting system for Beta members who cannot attend conventions but wish to vote.

Mobilizing young people to vote during their high school years is one way to address apathy among young people in political elections, said Bell, who is chairman of Louisiana High School Democrats.

“During last November’s election, I canvassed for candidates, and far too often did I run into people that either didn’t know it was election day or just didn’t care,” Bell said.

In Key Club, Bell, who wants to one day practice law, learned the value of humility and helping others. “I was humbled when I got the chance to partake in a service project in New Orleans where we gutted a struggling family’s house that was crippled by Hurricane Katrina,” Bell said.

In January, he delivered the winning campaign speech at the 66th Louisiana Beta Club Convention.

Now, he is tasked with making good on his promises, such as increasing student scholarship opportunities, being accessible to Beta members and providing greater transparency of club business.

“We (my team) knew that a relationship needed to be built if we were going to ask them for their vote,” Bell said.

Bell’s faith and desire to be a leader is keeping him focused.

“Jesus Christ, I believe, has been by my side ... President Obama greatly inspires me ... His speeches provide great inspiration for mine.”

He also is inspired by his mother, his late father, his grandmother and others.

“My mother, who is single, raised my sister and me to become intelligent young adults,” he said. “My father, who passed suddenly in 2013, was very ambitious.”

Bell wants to be a young leader who “leads by example and listens more and speaks less.”

Chante Dionne Warren is a freelance writer. She can be reached at chantewriter@hotmail.com.