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Bunting nominated for 2016 Presidential Scholar Award

By Nichole Smith
Homer Tribune

 Nolan Bunting

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Homer High School senior Nolan Bunting first became interested in technical education during his junior year, when he took a small engine class taught by Cameron Wyatt. Under Wyatt’s guidance and encouragement, Bunting flourished, passing all of the coursework and exams required to receive a Master Service Technician certificate — the highest industry rating that Briggs and Stratton offers. He continued his coursework to pass the authorized dealer competency exam.

Last month, Bunting became one of the first nominees in the Career and Technical Education Scholars Award Program; part of the Presidential Scholar Awards Program established in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson. In June, President Barack Obama signed an executive order expanding the program to include students who have achieved outstanding scholarship in career and technical education.

Bunting is one of only four people in Alaska to have the MST certification; he is also one of the youngest. He credits his application for the scholar award program to Wyatt, who encouraged him to pursue the program.

Alaska selects only five outstanding secondary students as U.S. Presidential Scholars in CTE.

“Each applicant is reviewed and chosen based on GPA, a letter of recommendation, technical competence in career and technical education, as well as leadership, employability, ingenuity and creativity in solving real-world problems,” Bunting explained. “My essay included all of these areas.”

If Bunting is selected as a 2016 Presidential Scholar, he will attend an all-expense-paid ceremony in Washington, D.C. Past award recipients have met first ladies, Nobel Peace Prize winners, commissioners, celebrities and even the president, himself.

A history aficionado, Bunting said, meeting “any president of the United States” would be an “incredible experience.”

“I would probably be nervous, but I would really like to thank him for being such an inspiration to so many people around the world,” Bunting said. “He has given hope to people that they can achieve great things if they work hard, overcome obstacles and behave with dignity and compassion.”

While Bunting finishes up his last year at Homer High, he also serves as a volunteer for the Seward Sea Life Center’s Marine Stranding Network. He is one of two captains for the drama, debate and forensics team, an officer with the school’s National Honor Society and co-vice president of Skills USA.

After high school, Bunting plans to attend Colorado State University to study zoology, with a pre-veterinary focus.

“I really want to eventually work at animal sanctuaries — or help with endangered species programs,” he said. “I would also like to be a veterinary pathologist, focusing on the spread and prevention of diseases in animals.”

Bunting added that he would like to include some botany classes, and of course history will be “slipped in there somewhere for amusement.”

The Presidential Scholars will be announced in early May 2016.

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