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NKU student gets political 'fix'

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Political junkie Adam Sandfoss is getting his fix this summer.

Sandfoss, 23, a Northern Kentucky University senior and president of the NKU Democrats, is spending the summer on a Capitol Hill scholarship.

Sandfoss, of Cold Spring, was one of three Kentucky college students - and one of two from NKU - to be selected for the Henry Clay Society Internship. Leigha Phelps, an NKU junior, also received the internship scholarship.

Students receive \$3,000 for living expenses and work for a member of Congress based on their political affiliation and personal interest. Sandfoss was assigned to U.S. Rep. Ben Chandler, a Democrat from Versailles in central Kentucky's Bluegrass region.

Sandfoss arrived a week early for his assignment so he could take in the sites and learn how to navigate one of the country's busiest cities, a place known for its traffic gridlock and mobility issues.

"This is my first time ever in Washington, D.C.," Sandfoss said. "It's just been amazing. I've only been here for a few days and already I've seen so much.

"This really is a dream come true for me."

Sandfoss is writing his experiences on a blog called The Kicking Donkey, at kykickingdonkey.blogspot.com.

One of his first posts captured his enthusiasm of being in the nation's capital in the lingo of the 20-something generation.

"I took my first trip to the National Mall and it was incredible," Sandfoss wrote. "I visited the Lincoln Memorial and was blown away by how big it was! The thing is freakin' huge!"

As far as starting work this week for Chandler's office, Sandfoss said he'll do whatever is asked.

"I'll work on bill research, conduct tours of the Capitol, handle constituency work over the phone, make the coffee, clean the snack room, whatever it takes," he said. "I'm just thrilled and appreciative about being here."

Sandfoss has been involved in the Campbell County Democratic Party since he was in high school.

"I'm just fascinated with politics," Sandfoss said. "I'm enthralled with social issues and love getting involved and learning more about the system. Working on campaigns provides a good mix of activism and learning about policy.

"But young people need to stay involved," he said. "The interest has dropped off a little since the

presidential campaign. That's understandable. People got really fired up for Barack Obama. But we have to keep that momentum."

Campbell County Democratic Party Chairwoman Sue Orth said the party is proud of Sandfoss.

"It's such a kick to see these young men and woman who have worked with us locally go out and put what they've learned to practical use and start achieving their dreams," Orth said.

Orth said other young Democrats are also involved with politics and the local party:

Sisters Clare and Emma Ploucha of Fort Thomas have worked on local and state campaigns as well as last year's presidential campaign. Clare is a junior at Harvard University studying history and literature. Last year, while working with the Harvard Institute of Politics, she worked as the liaison for Sen. Ted Kennedy's staff. Emma, a junior at Highlands High School, founded the Highlands High School Democratic Club.

Mike McClannahan, a 2008 NKU grad and Highland Heights native, has been working with the Campbell County Democratic Party since high school. He will attend George Mason University outside of Washington this fall to pursue a master's degree in public administration.

Eric McCann of Fort Thomas has also been a long-time Democratic volunteer. She was deputy field director of the Obama campaign in North Carolina and is now working as field director for the Missouri Democratic Party.

"Campbell County Democrats are lucky to have such an active group of young Democrats enthusiastically working with us," Orth said. "It has been part of our party-building program to pull in as many youth as we can."

The Campbell County Republican Party is also working to attract and involve more young people, said party Chairman Jeff Kidwell.

"The Campbell County Republican Party has broadened our outreach to young people by adopting new technologies that are a part of the younger crowd's everyday life like Facebook, blogs, our e-mail database, etc," Kidwell wrote last week in an e-mail.

"Our youth chair Elizabeth Kidwellis also is working with Mike Strunk, president of the NKU College Republicans, to get more young people involved," he wrote. "In our 72-hour get-out-the-vote effort last year, we had many new faces and many of them were young people getting involved with the party for the first time. Getting young people to become active in our party ensures our future growth."

Additional Facts

Moore reception

Kentucky Democratic Party Chairman Charlie Moore is scheduled to attend a reception Monday night in Fort Mitchell.

The event is from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at 222 Fort Mitchell Ave. and is being hosted by the Kenton County Democratic Party.

County party chairman Col Owens said Moore's visit is not a fund-raiser but a reception.

"This is an opportunity for Democrats and other interested parties to meet the new chairman and hear about his plans for the KDP," Owens said. "The primary purpose is for people to get to know Chairman Moore, and vice versa."

