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Ashley Tuggle in Centennial High School's library.
photo provided by Wendy Crooks

A Presidential Classroom Experience

By Wendy Crooks

THEY SAY THAT, "GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT." In Ashley Tuggle's case, it took waiting and working hard. As an adolescent, Ashley moved around living in California, Colorado and now Texas. Moving like that can certainly keep a girl from settling down and finding her groove.

Now, at 16, and having just finished her junior year at Centennial High School, Ashley has definitely made a place for herself in the Frisco area. Over the last few years, she has made some great friends, joined the choir, become a videographer for the girl's varsity basketball team, and continued to be a Girl Scout.

After talking for only a short time with Ashley, one thing was extremely evident. Ashley has an enormous passion for politics and government. Her first taste of government came

when she became a Student Council officer. She has been the Committee Chair for Faculty Relations and Environment for the Student Council.

In order to further quench her thirst for knowledge of the political arena, Ashley applied to be a part of the Presidential Classroom in Washington, DC. With a strong grade point average and a seemingly endless repertoire of extracurricular activities on her side, Ms. Tuggle was accepted. On January 29, 2005, Ashley traveled to Washington, DC where she spent a full week with other high school juniors and seniors taking an insider's look into the legal system. There were 21 students representing Texas but Ashley was the only student from the Frisco ISD.

The exciting week included a trip to the White House, the U.S. Department of State, the Arlington National

Cemetery and area law firms. The students also had a chance to meet with key people such as presidential appointees, members of congress, senior military officials, top business leaders and journalists. Ashley seemed most excited about the seminar they had on the Senate floor. With a chance to meet United States Senator Barack Obama from Illinois, she described it by saying, "That was cool."

Where does this deep desire to learn more about the justice system come from? Ashley laughed and said, "Well, I know that it isn't anything like the real world, but I was inspired by Law & Order, CSI, stuff like that."

Although not even old enough to be a registered voter yet, Ms. Tuggle definitely has some very political opinions. When asked whether she views herself as a Republican or a Democrat, she responded very confidently, "I am a Republican, but I have a lot of liberal social ideas." When prodded, she admitted that she doesn't believe in the death penalty. Then, spoken like a true student, she said that given the chance she would love to remove some of the standardized tests in school.

What about her thoughts on the proposed Frisco Teen Curfew that was recently put before the City Council? She said simply, "I think it is the parent's job not the city's to keep the teens off of the streets."

Looking toward the future, Ashley would love to go back to the Presidential Classroom next year, to learn even more. She would love to attend college at Boston College, Fairfield College or Georgetown where she will major in Criminal Justice.

The Presidential Classroom's tagline is "Not your typical week in Washington." It seems appropriate because it is apparent that Ashley Tuggle is definitely not your typical teenager!

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.