

Spotlight on Grass Range



Grass Range students prepare for adventure out east

By CHARLIE DENISON | Senior Reporter

In June, Grass Range students Cassidy Dutton, Nola Goss, Jasmine Brinley, Morgan Corean, Garrett Eickhoff, Hanna Matovich, Colleen Armstrong and Jacob Jessen are headed to Washington, D.C., and New York City with history teacher George Maruska.

This will be Maruska's fifth trip as part of the Close Up civic education program. The students are thrilled for the opportunity.

"I've never been to New York City or Washington, D.C.," said Cassidy. "It will be a new experience for me, and I'm looking forward to it. I've done a lot of traveling. I've been to England, Germany and Italy. It will be great to see the White House and be close to the President. It will be great to go where our country started."

"I'm really excited because I've never been out of our state," said Nola. "It will be cool to go to such a big city, especially coming from such a rural area."

Garrett said he also hasn't been far from Montana and wants to see just what it is people do in the big cities.

"I want to know what their jobs are, I want to learn about their way of life," he said.

Colleen and Nola said they are curious about how the economy operates in D.C. and New York.

"We deal with a lot of agriculture," Nola said. "They don't. They have much different imports and exports."

Jasmine, who is new at Grass Range



(From left) Morgan Corean, Jasmine Brinley, Hanna Matovich, Garrett Eickhoff, Jacob Jessen, Colleen Armstrong, Cassidy Dutton and Nola Goss are headed to Washington D.C. and New York City as part of the Close Up Program with history teacher George Maruska.

Photo courtesy of George Maruska

School, said she was familiar with the Close Up program and is glad she can finally participate.

"I wanted to do the last trip and it wasn't in my price range," she said. "When

I moved here I got the opportunity. I'm really excited to go."

Hanna said she's especially looking forward to New York City.

"I'm excited to see how different the

lifestyle is there," she said. "I'm curious how the people live their lives."

Morgan said she's also psyched for NYC. "I want to see Times Square," she said.

Morgan added that she is most interested in learning how Congress is set up and how close together Senators and Congressman work.

Fortunately the Close Up students will get to see this firsthand, as they get individual meetings with all three Montana Congressmen. Maruska always looks forward to this exchange.

"The best part of this whole thing is that the students get to experience government," Maruska said.

Students also get a chance to interact with students from California, Texas, Wyoming, North Dakota and Argentina.

"There is culture shock on both sides," Maruska said. "People have asked if we still fight Indians here."

"Some people don't even know where Montana is," added Cassidy.

The students headed east are grateful for the opportunity to take this once-in-a-lifetime trip, and they know they owe a lot to the Grass Range community – and outlying communities – for making it possible.

"It takes about \$3,500 per student to do this," Maruska said, "and that's all-inclusive. It covers airline, food, hotels, the whole bit. The community has been great, as have the students. They are a good bunch of kids."

"We've worked hard for this," said Hanna.

Thank you to the following community members for making this opportunity possible: