

“You don’t have to be a superstar... just believe in yourself.”

By Rachel Rimm, President 2010

What has BHS MC given me? Well... that’s quite a question. Model Congress initially seemed interesting, but I never thought I’d go very far with it. I didn’t know much about it when I signed up, but I knew that my brother really liked it, so I figured that I might as well give it a shot. I wasn’t really *afraid* of speaking in public, but sometimes, I didn’t feel that I really had anything terribly interesting to say. But Model Congress boosted my public speaking skills significantly and gave me a wealth of interesting things to talk about. Besides debate, speech, and bill-writing, I learned life skills that are totally unrelated to model congress. Though Model Congress, I learned how to break the ice, how to make new friends, how to safely “stretch the truth”, how to dance (thanks to those nifty hand-outs you always sneak into the folders), how to reach out to those who need assistance, how to lead, how to sleep on a bus, and how to bond with people I may have nothing in common with. Model Congress has given me all this and so much more... If BHS MC didn’t exist, I’d have fewer friends, not-so-good leadership skills, more money in my parents’ pockets!, and not nearly enough amazing memories. Model Congress was undeniably my favorite club/extracurricular activity I participated in throughout my high school career.

I think the most valuable gift that Model Congress has given me, has been a sense of independence and self confidence. Before the many practice sessions and conferences, I would not have felt comfortable standing up and passionately defending my side of an argument. This is not to say that I will challenge people just because I can, but Model Congress has equipped me with the skills that I need in case I choose to. The most amusing experience this year was definitely Harvard Model Congress. It was my first time to go to Harvard, and it was all seniors and so many of my closest friends. So many incredible memories; everything from strapping a plastic tray on Maddy’s back for the delegate dance, to dubbing the voices on the TV with Keah (which was fueled entirely by the laughter of Katrina and Corey), staying up WAY too late working on our surprise case, dancing like fools for the people in the hotel tower across from us--and truly, so so so so so much more...

What have I given to BHS MC? Well, not a whole lot of awards--I was never the superstar. I did well, but nothing to gloat about. But I did give a whole lot of time and effort. Most importantly, I offered help. One of reasons why I most aspired to be a president was so underclassmen would look up to me and ask for my assistance. As a freshman, I was beyond confused and all I wanted was for someone to give me advice, or lend me a hand. Sometimes I got help, but usually only if it was offered. I was often too intimidated to ask a junior or senior for help. What I wanted to be as a senior president was to be the one that underclassmen felt comfortable asking for help. I wanted to reach out to them, before they had to ask. I can say proudly that I think I achieved this goal.

To future MCers, as cheesy as it sounds, **Model Congress is truly about believing in yourself.** I started Model Congress as a freshman, and unlike some of my peers who had started in 8th grade, I had NO experience whatsoever. I only knew about parliament and bill-writing from the School House Rock hit “I’m Just a Bill”. I went to Columbia the spring of my freshman year. My little freshman feet were shaking in my 1 inch heeled shoes as I made my first point. Looking back, it was probably the dumbest point I could have possibly made- rephrasing what the speaker **just** said in the form of a question. But I did it. I spoke. And then I presented my bill. I mumbled and stuttered and made the shortest opening speech known to man. I raced back to my seat and said very little, and as soon as my bill was voted on, I said nothing else the whole conference. At this rate, I’d be a senior and barely be able to articulate a speech, much less get an award! Model Congress was... scary! But for whatever reason, I kept doing it. Even sophomore year in practice sessions, my heart would race when I was called on to ask a measly little question. I’ve never been a timid or shy person, but for whatever reason, Model Congress seemed difficult and complex, and it made me very nervous. But I still liked it. So I continued. I went to 3 conferences and slowly got more and more comfortable. By my junior year I tried as best as I could to abandon my shyness. I researched and wrote a bill that I was truly passionate about and I defended it like my life depended on it. When it was passed into full session at Princeton, I felt like crying and I actually told my chair I didn’t want to do it but for whatever reason, it was put in the docket anyway. She shot me an apologetic glance and came over to ask me if I wanted to do it. After mentally preparing myself and accepting encouragement from my friends, I told her I’d do it. It was introduced and I nervously walked to the front of the room in front of what seemed like a million well dressed teenagers. I started my speech pretty much reading directly off my paper, but I was trembling so much that I could barely see the words. I took a deep breath and put the paper down. I had my speech down pat and the facts were ingrained in my head, I just had to believe in myself. So I did, and I gave a slaitmmin’ opening speech, and several excellent speeches after that. I held nothing back in my summation speech and, needless to say, my bill passed wh flying colors. Getting past that was crucial to my Model Congress success. Just believing in myself and not constantly doubting my ability was what made me the MC’er that I am today. It sounds like I’m quoting an inspirational poster, but I’m being honest. **You don’t have to be a superstar.** You don’t have to be the one who speaks the best or the most. There’s always going to be someone better than you, and someone worse! **But in the end, if you believe in yourself and prepare and tell yourself that you DO know what you’re talking about, you will find that Model Congress isn’t so scary after all.** No regrets, no shame, just a WHOLE lot of fun. Thank you Petela for all that you have done and for all that you do. Model Congress has undoubtedly made a fundamental difference in my life, and that would not be the case if it weren’t for you and all of your efforts. And thanks for all the smileys ☺☺☺

Rachel attended 8 conferences, winning 3 awards, 2 of them gavels for her efforts and performance at the above Princeton MC and Harvard DCourt. Her brother Dan was a multi award winning MC President in 2009. Like her president peer M.Coulter, her cheerful smile ☺ and positive personality will be missed, a lot ☺ She will be attending Northeastern University majoring in Psychology, positive psychology no doubt ☺