

## *Some Student/Alumni Reflections from Graduating BHS MCers 2007*

“Model Congress, for all the aches and pains it has wrought upon me, has honestly been the best part of my high school experience, excluding all the social aspects of course. Of all the activities I was involved with at school, it really is the best thing I have ever done, above lacrosse, rugby, all the clubs, all the games, dances, etc. So many good times have come out of Model Congress that I remember it as treat, a privilege, not a work experience. But that same quality is what is most amazing about MC, because although it was perpetually fun it also included a lot of very hard work and talent -- thus the reason why it went as well as it has for me over these four years. Without MC I can say for certain that I would be a hundred times less well rounded, less eloquent, less versatile, less experienced, less “tested” and I would certainly have fewer friendships (maybe only fifteen less). MC has given me confidence, experience, work endurance and so many other qualities which transfer over to life skills.

I know you love sports analogies, so here are a few. A lot of people reflect on how running suicide sprints for Lacrosse taught them the value of perseverance, but all that Model Congress cross-training directly strengthens the most important muscle a high school/college student has: his brain. No stretch of the imagination is required to see how arguing politics is important to a student’s maturation and intellectual development. District Court is a bench press for your snap-judgment decision making and intuitive debate skills. Researching and introducing a piece of legislation are 300 yard shuttle runs for your research and presentation skills. Basically, MC is a decathlon of academic skills (maybe a biathlon because that is the coolest event known to man, it’s cross country skiing mixed with target shooting). Thus Model Congress has strengthened my mind, more than Lacrosse or Rugby ever strengthened my body.

A world, or Branford High School, without Model Congress would be such a sad sight. One of the school’s major cliques would be missing, and AP Physics, Track and Choir would be all that was left! Where would the kids interested in the Social and Political Sciences hang out on Friday nights?! Personally, I would be a very different person, likely for the worst, if I had not gone on that fateful trip to Columbia back in my freshmen year. I remember your song and dance to join mc in Mrs. Leper’s Civ/Lit class and when I got the mc application sheet after you left many of my peers I was with said “pfff, forget that, I’m not writing an essay.” I could have tossed that sheet in the trash, but instead I bit the bullet as I would so many times again, but happily, because where would I be without Model Congress? Probably unhappily married to Lacrosse still, never playing but not having anything better to do, taking easy classes instead of bellying up to the AP US table and proudly achieving a high 5. The hand that MC dealt me really set me on a path that took me to places I would have never gone otherwise. I honestly think that if I hadn’t gone to Columbia or joined MC I would not have done as well in school, worked as hard in school, taken as many hard classes, or gotten into the colleges I did. It really was the backbone of my BHS experience. That is why it holds so much respect in the minds of many faculty, parents, students and townspeople. Taking 50+ kids to another state for a long weekend is probably one of the more risky and ridiculous schemes I have ever heard in terms of school trips, but somehow you manage to pull it off, and a lot of that is owed to how honest to goodness a positive experience it is, hands down. We may whine, complain, bitch, cry, tease you, but we are all thankful for all the stuff you do -- I know you do a lot, and do it well.

Thank you so much Petela, for running Model Congress and giving me and everyone else the opportunity to participate and experience all the conferences and concerts, banquets and bonding-times. On a personal note, thank you so-so much for putting up with all my ridiculousness, because I know there were times when I was too much, talking too much, fooling around too much, joking and teasing you too much, but I always tried to toe the line and not cross it. Did you ever yell at me? I don’t remember, but if you did I don’t hold it against you and I definitely deserved it. But back to what I was saying, for all that sassy stuff I did, you let me be myself, because you really know a lot more than you seem to or let us know you do☺ -- I had to work that smiley in there for you. Next year I will really miss walking by your room and saying “Lookin’ good Petela” and I bet you will too because who doesn’t like a nice compliment like that? But it’s more than that; you are one of the few teachers who have a serious and sincere connection with his students. I feel like I haven’t thanked you enough but how many times can I say thank you, you know? My real thanks will come next year, when you have a sharp decline in smart-aleck comments, loud rap music, ugly faces in your pictures, messy hotel rooms, morning ambushes, distracting visits and all my trademarks. I hope you’ll miss all my antics as much as I will your Model Congress trips and you – thank you thank you thank you...”

**Liam Killion** was a mature and older looking BHS MC President last year, (often mistaken as a chaperone) who won back to back gavels at Princeton in his senior fall and then at Harvard in the winter leading his DCourt team to victory. He is currently attending Bowdoin College, proud to be a “Polar Bear” with an undecided major but interest in Psychology, Physics, and Design. I do miss his daily walk by’s, smiling bearded face, and kind witty words, not to mention his mc sidekicks Weber, Mishkin, Shea & Schwartz ☺

“BHS MC has given me so much. It’s honestly difficult for me to reach into the depths of my memories to discern all the amazing things model congress has done for me. I can certainly say that a shared component of the many things is a whole lot of happiness -- Model Congress just makes me happy, really happy. I enjoy it so thoroughly that I can estimate that many of my fondest high school memories revolve around this club. I have made some of my best friends through model congress, notably Ryan Sullivan, who has become very close as a result of being presidents together. I have also learned a lot-- it would be hard not to amid so many talented kids put together for such remarkable congresses -- there’s a reason the Ivy’s host these events! In addition, I have seen some great places and heard the words of some great people, not to mention that I have made many quality acquaintances from other schools who attended these conferences.

Most importantly, I have learned compassion. I have given a lot of my time, energy, and love to this club. I can’t really imagine getting through high school without BHS MC. I wouldn’t have had an outlet, a home, a hobby. Further, I would not have a Petela -- a great mentor, the “teacher/adult figure” to seek out for questions, guidance, and of course a little humility by means of being made fun of ☺! I don’t know who I would be without model congress. I certainly don’t know what I would be doing with the rest of my life coming out of high school. I credit model congress for my increased confidence, stronger speaking skills, determination, lasting friendships; and I know that these qualities and the program and you have opened so many doors to me that will continue to help me throughout the rest of my college years and life.”

**Kelly Peterson**, aka miss giggles and gavel girl PMC07, was last year’s yin MC President, the Queen as she preferred☺. Full of personality, charm, compassion and intelligence, she was one of our most dedicated and loyal presidents and is truly missed. She is currently a frosh at Union College, focusing and grinding great grades and making many friends...

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“Model Congress has been a major part of my career at BHS. Through the constant debate I was able to greatly improve my public speaking skills and my self confidence. Moreover, I have developed a deep appreciation for our style of government and the many people who participate in it. Model Congress allowed me to determine who I am as a person. I met all (or close to all) of my closest friends because of this great club and I also was able to meet many amazing people and go to many amazing places. Model Congress is also full of laughs and, if you’re a president, full of drama. The most fun I had this year was at Deer Island and at Harvard MC. Deer Island was probably the greatest trip ever. Boating on the St. Lawrence River, eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and hanging out with all of my best friends and your Aussie cousin for a few days was absolutely amazing. It was also cool because I knew not just any person could go to that island, you had to be special, or just know someone special ☺. Harvard MC 2007 was awesome because of the District Court. For a while I have wanted to go to law school and become a lawyer and HMC was the first place I was able to test the waters as both an attorney and as a witness. I had so much fun and learned so much -- it was a truly excellent experience. Although my team didn’t win any awards, I still think we did quite well for our first time. Other than those memorable events, I can’t forget the little meetings after class and after school with you Petela, especially the ones at Sally’s pizza and Lenny’s. It was always fun just hanging out with you and a few of the others talking about MC, life and people. If MC didn’t exist at BHS, I would have different friends, different interests, and I would not be as self confident as I am today. My HS experience would have been much less meaningful and I most likely may not have won a book award for Government and Politics at awards night! Without MC, the leadership skills I have now would not exist. In the end it comes down to this: I love BHS MC and if it wasn’t for you and MC, I might be a lost soul...

Graduating was easy because I was just leaving the school. This is difficult because I am leaving behind the best thing that has ever happened to me. Like I said earlier, I am who I am because of this club. I am more aware of current events, generally more intelligent, better at posing for photos, better at smiling (eyes and teeth), better looking! and just an overall better person because of this club. Petela, thank you so much. You don’t realize the impact you have made on my life. You have been there for me as a teacher, a mentor, a pal and at times “another daddy!” I can’t thank you enough. I’ll never forget your quirky ways and your overall great personality. Try not to forget me when I go off to college because I know for sure that you are always going to have a place in my heart and memories. My only MC regret is not working hard enough. Although I have worked hard, I feel like I could have done more and if I could go back, I definitely would. I have so much more to say, but my emotions are choking me up and causing me to get writers block which is in turn causing me much frustration. Now, although you deserve a whole novel from me because of all that you have given me, a final, simple “thank you” is left -- I can’t suck up any more than I have over the past 4 years! Once again, thank you for everything. You are a truly great guy and I am so thankful for having had the pleasure to learn from you and be in your presence. I don’t think you realize all of the good that you do for the youth of Branford. I just can’t thank you enough.”

**Ryan Sullivan**, aka The Legend, The Man, was last year’s yang MC President, the King as he preferred to be called ☺. Full of confidence, conservatism, charm and compassion, he like Kelly, was also one of our most dedicated and loyal presidents. He is currently a proud UCONN Husky, making top cop daddy proud, and daddy #2 also! He’s missed, a lot.

**These are just a few of many similar sentiments students have expressed over the years. It is why I do MC. – Petela ☺**