

Busy Del City teen shares message of diversity

Steward looking to unify students across state as State STUCO President

BY TRACI CHAPMAN
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Breland Steward is a force of nature – a 16-year-old with a discipline defying that of many adults and the willingness to lead, the Del City High School junior is determined to bring the need for diversity to the forefront.

As the 2018 Oklahoma Association of Student Council state president, Steward is in a perfect position to do just that, at the same time shaking up a status quo going back decades.

“Breland is only the second black Oklahoma state president and also second president to come from Del City High School,” said Kristy Cooper, DCHS student council advisor and OASC state convention coordinator. “It’s a big deal for all of us.”

In Fact, Del City’s only other state president served in 1966; DCHS students in 1970 and 2014 served as vice president and secretary, respectively – and the school is the only one in the Mid-Del Public School District whose students have become state officers. Those were the days of Del City’s initial STUCO heyday, but the school would see a lull in interest, something that changed in 2014, when Del City hosted the state OASC convention.

“It was probably the best experience of my career,” Principal Gina Hill said. “We planned it for five years and



Del City High School junior Breland Steward was elected the 2018 Oklahoma Association of Student Council president. In addition to student council, Steward is involved in National Honor Society, Superintendent’s Student Advisory Board, STOMP, drama, track and cross country. -Staff photo by Traci Chapman

raised more than \$200,000 to hold it, and we had 1,706 students here, not including our students.

“It changed, I think, our whole school,” she said.

One of those inspired by that conference just happened to be someone close to Steward, someone whose interest in student council would pave the way for much of what came after it – his brother, Brandon.

“My brother and his friends got into it in their senior year, and that was the first year he got a car, so I had to ride with Brandon,” Steward

said. “I would be stuck at the student council events, and at first, I was forced to be there – then, I started liking it.”

While the program is again strong and growing, going up against schools traditionally known as student council powerhouses might make it seem Steward’s chances of becoming state president faced long odds.

Especially with seven people vying for the post.

But, Steward wasn’t alone in his quest, as the DCHS Class of 2019 junior class

president and his fellow STUCO members united in their campaign message, and a single campaign became a group effort.

“Everybody else was like, ‘vote for me, vote for my school, this will be fun,’ but this thing’s already fun,” Steward said. “Del City is so different, so diversified, and we decided to go with that; we wanted to promote diversity and learn more about it together.”

That message resonated with those voting, Cooper and Del City Principal Gina Hill said – with each school

participating in OASC state allowed two votes, anyone prevailing had to receive 50 percent plus one vote.

“That’s basically unheard of – normally, with seven there’s a runoff,” Cooper said. “But, that wasn’t the case, and Breland got it.”

The school is gearing up for the fulfillment of Steward’s election promises, with a diversity conference set for March 31 at Del City High School. In addition to spearheading that effort, Steward will pick student committees, help prepare for the November state conference and represent Oklahoma in the national student council conference, scheduled for June in Plymouth, Minnesota, among a host of other responsibilities.

All that might seem a bit overwhelming for a high school junior, but for Steward challenges and hard work are nothing new, he said – something to which Cooper and Hill also attested. A National Honor Society member who works part-time as a grocery bagger at Tinker Air Force Base, Steward also runs track and cross-country, is a Superintendent’s Advisory Board member, is a STOMP captain and in drama.

Steward began his STUCO journey in his sophomore year; in fact, he will be the only Class of 2019 male STUCO member involved in the activity for three years, Cooper said.

“Breland really is an example of how much one student can accomplish,” Hill said. “We are very, very proud of him and can’t wait to see what else he does.”