

Print Page

By DANA HERRA dherra@daily-chronicle.com

International lessons

SYCAMORE – Kelsey Quinn is preparing to travel to Geneva, Switzerland, this weekend, where she will assume a new identity – that of a United Nations delegate from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"My committee is focusing on the topic of illegal weapons," Quinn said. "Bosnia is a little hostile, so they're not exactly for restricting weapons trades at all. I guess I'm going to have to go in and act like a big, tough gun lord or something."

Quinn, who is actually a petite, blond-haired senior at the University of Illinois-Springfield and a native of Sycamore, is one of more than 1,000 college students from about 70 U.N. member countries who will participate next week in the Global Model U.N. Conference. The conference will be held at the organization's Geneva headquarters.

"It will be such an honor to go there," Quinn said. "It's so fun to think the U.N. is actually putting this on."

Quinn has a double major in political science and international relations, and hopes upon graduation to work in the international community, possibly in the Department of Agriculture's foreign service, she said. She speaks both Spanish and Japanese and spent a year in high school as an exchange student in Japan.

"I just love the international scene," she said. "I want to travel and work on an international level."

Model U.N. programs are held at schools from elementary through college level throughout the world, but this is the first global conference. Students will role play as foreign diplomats in simulated sessions of the U.N. General Assembly and main committees.

Last spring, Quinn attended the national conference in New York, where she represented another eastern European country, Croatia.

"I definitely learned about cooperation and working together," she said. "Croatia is a small country that is not part of the European Union, but would like to be. So when the European Union nations would caucus, I would go with them, but they didn't really want to listen to what I had to say."

Quinn also learned some tough lessons in diplomacy, such as voting the way the people you're representing want you to.

"It's hard representing a country whose views are somewhat different than mine," she said. "I did vote with the European Union bloc, because that's what Croatia would do. It's not like there were huge clashes, but sometimes it's hard just to go with the flow."

Quinn did come out of her experience with some ideas of ways to better the U.N., particularly when it comes to the balance of power on the security council. And she would like to see the establishment of an international court with some teeth, she said.

"It's not looked at as serious. People tend to laugh off the U.N.," she said. "It is a great organization, and it's definitely helping people."

Copyright © 2009 Daily Chronicle. All rights reserved.