Ella Stewart, a junior at Holyoke High School, traveled to Washington D.C. with 45 other Colorado 4-H members June 13-20.

Citizen Washington Focus (CWF) is an annual event for 4-H members from around the country. On Stewart's trip there were members from Colorado, Mississippi, Iowa and Wisconsin. Throughout the summer, other states will visit Washington for their CWF.

One 4-H member from each county is chosen to attend. Stewart applied earlier this year through the extension office, and was chosen as this year's Phillips County attendee. After spending months corresponding with trip leaders and preparing to travel to the capital, CWF far exceeded Stewart's expectations.

While in D.C. students participated in a combination of sightseeing and educational events. On the sightseeing end of things, Stewart commented on how amazing it was to see so many of the country's prominent memorials. Her favorite was the Holocaust Memorial. While it was a sad atmosphere, Stewart was glad to see the people being honored. One quotation in particular has stuck with her in the weeks since the tour: "For the dead and the living, we must bear witness."

Other memorable sights were the Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Iwo Jima, Arlington National Cemetery, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Library of Congress.

Equally interesting, said Stewart, were the leadership workshops the students participated in. In one, students learned to write and pass a bill. Learning to write a bill in formal terms was one of the more enlightening aspects for Stewart, and having never had such an experience, she really enjoyed discussing relevant issues such as gun rights and ethanol.

In other workshops, students formed various committees to complete tasks. Stewart was on the newsletter committee that wrote up a newsletter that was distributed to all CWF participants.

An event that was truly memorable for Stewart was the opportunity to meet the Colorado representatives at the capital. Stewart spent most of her time there speaking with Representative Betsy Markey, and feels she learned a lot from that experience.

Visiting the country's capital was an incredibly rewarding experience, said Stewart. She is very pleased she had the opportunity to make new friends on the trip and to see the sights around D.C. The things she learned there, she added, are priceless. Visiting Washington is unlike anything she has done before, and Stewart encourages anyone who is given the opportunity to go.

Having returned to Holyoke, Stewart is enjoying her summer and preparing for the Phillips County Fair. Her 4-H project this year is poultry. In her seven years as a 4-H member, Stewart has done projects in several areas, including quilting, global citizenship, early childhood, scrapbooking, dogs and cats. In the past, Stewart has served as 4-H Challengers secretary and photographer, and she currently serves as club vice president.