

# Berlin High graduates link up in Washington, D.C.

By Jim Wolff

Matt Cujak, Berlin High School class of 2006, is the first BHS graduate to join a Washington, D.C. summer internship program run by Rear Admiral Jim Carey, also a Berlin High graduate (class of 1956).

Cujak joins a diverse group of scholars from colleges and universities across North America that includes, this year, a student from Oxford University in London, England. His selection to this elite program represents one more step in his training for national leadership opportunities, something that has interested him since his early school years.

"When I was a student at Berlin High School, I always thought I wanted to be involved in politics and helping run our country," Cujak says. "The thrill of cloture votes and partisan posturing has always been in

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my blood."

For Admiral Carey, Cujak represents his ultimate aim of bringing a new generation of Berlin High School grads to the nation's capitol "and hopefully also bringing some Berlin, WI common sense into our nation's government." Carey adds: "The reason I pursued Matt coming to Washington, D.C. as a Washington scholar was to get this program started within Berlin High School. Nothing would please me more than to see it now expanded to at least one BHS student a year based on the very successful track record established by Matt as a highly-promising future leader for America."

Fortunately for Matt, some of his teachers at BHS noticed his love of politics and fostered it.

"That led to one of the greatest experiences I have had in my young life," he says. "In my sophomore year, social studies teacher and icon Gary Knoke told me of a program that was offered as a constituent service by Congressman Tom Petri, U.S. Representative from this area." As a result, Cujak applied to the Congressman's office for the U.S. House of Representatives Page Program and was accepted. That fall (2004), he moved to Washington and spent his junior year of high school working in the nation's capitol and, as he put it, "walking the hallowed halls of Congress. That was truly a life-altering experience for me," he adds. "I would spend that year in D.C. as a Page all over again, if I could."

He returned to BHS, rejoining his classmates for his senior year, spending that year preparing himself for the move to upstate New York and Syracuse University. After two years studying political science and pre-law at the Maxwell School at Syracuse U., he was contacted by BHS Principal Bob Eidahl who told him about a BHS alumnus that wanted to help fellow Berlinites get involved in national policy and the federal government in Washington, D.C.

"That alumnus was Rear Admiral James Carey (USN, Ret.)," said Cujak. "He corresponded with me and put himself on the line to help a fellow BHS graduate obtain an internship in Washington. The admiral has founded and funded foundation scholarship programs devoted to national leadership and training of the next generation of America's leaders. His Washington Scholars Fellowship Program, a part of the Future Leaders of America Foundation and the Admiral Carey Foundation, has been instrumental in getting young people in their junior and senior years of college involved in Washington, D.C., the federal government and the U.S. Congress, learning and being trained in governance and national public policy."

Carey hopes that Matt is just the first of future leaders from Berlin to experience this opportunity. "This effort would not have succeeded without Berlin High School's Principal, Mr. Eidahl, having been a huge help in our locating THE RIGHT



PHOTO SUBMITTED TO BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS

**BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL graduate Matt Cujak (left), class of 2006, attends a Washington Scholars Leadership event on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. with Rear Admiral Jim Carey, Berlin High School class of 1956, founder of the Washington Scholars Program and the Future Leaders for America Foundation.**

STUDENT to be our first participant. He took the time and made the effort to locate Matt and put us in touch with him. Matt is proving by his excellent performance in Washington, D.C. to have been the RIGHT CHOICE. He has proven to be the right BHS graduate at the right time to begin this program. He is a solid, productive, mature young man who represents Berlin High School with both honor and honesty."

Cujak notes that, "because of Admiral Carey, president of the BHS class of '56, I am now working at the Government Relations branch of one of the nation's largest cancer care organizations, US Oncology. This experience is giving me a much better idea of how legislation and government relations factor into national policy and is helping to train me for a life and a career in either public or private service in Washington, D.C. While in D.C., I have been able to do things I would never have dreamed of doing when I was younger. I've already attended a tremendous black tie event with the Washington Scholars and the Admiral, and I've met numerous U.S. Congressmen and Senators and other national leaders of our country.

"I have much to be thankful for and without people like Adm. Carey, Mr. Eidahl and Mr. Knoke, I would not be where I am today. Thank you, Berlin, for helping this young lad receive the education and have the opportunity to come to our nation's capitol and be trained and credentialed to become, hopefully one day, one of our nation's leaders."

Adm. Carey points out that the range of internship assignments is wide-ranging and involves several federal agencies, national public policy organizations, the Congress, international finance, and several health care organizations. "We also involve the entire class in a broad range of social events here in the nation's capitol city," Carey says, "from the 4th of July concert and fireworks on the national mall, the events at the Capitol where some of our interns work on security detail, the National Debutante Cotillion Summer Social events, and a thousand and one other summer events that make life and work in Washington, D.C. so very exciting and educational for this, our future generation and our future national leadership."

Carey adds that every single penny that's spent on the Wash-

ington Scholars interns comes from private donations and not a single penny is spent on salaries to operate the program. One hundred percent of the management, leadership, administration operations, and oversight come from an all-volunteer staff made up of donors, prior Washington Scholars graduates, and fellow citizens interested in youth leadership training for future generations. "Our motto is 'Training Tomorrow's National Leaders Today,'" Carey says, "and we feel we truly live that motto. Over 40 of our past Washington Scholars graduates now work full-time here in the nation's capitol as we seek to train more and more

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of our nation's 'best and brightest' in order to ensure that our future leadership for America is the very best that our society can produce. Also, literally 100% of the graduates of the Washington Scholars Program donate back to the program after they graduate, thus doing their part to give back to the program and the nation in order to ensure that there is money available to train future generations just as others donated to the program in order that they might receive this outstanding leadership training."

Anyone interested in learning more about the program can access their websites at [www.futureleadersforamerica.org](http://www.futureleadersforamerica.org) and [www.washingtonscholars.org](http://www.washingtonscholars.org).

"My vision in this effort," Carey says, "is to grow the participation of Berlin High School students over the years and establish a solid track record of performance and success, and then hopefully to be able to fund this program on behalf of Berlin High School students 'in perpetuity' through an endowment from the Admiral James J. Carey Foundation."