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Richard Calderon, left, and Vanessa Diazdeleon attend the Hugh O’Brian Youth (HOBY) Leadership seminar. The seminar is a fun and challenging way to encourage young leaders to make positive changes in their community and the world. These two students were chosen as ambassadors to represent Liberal High School at this year’s seminar. Courtesy photo

By VICTORIA CALDERON • Leader & Times Hugh O’Brian Youth (HOBY) Leadership is a program that has served to build and inspire young leaders since 1958. HOBY seminars are conducted around the world, and students between their sophomore and junior years are chosen to attend as ambassadors. In the United States, seminars are hosted in each individual state. Liberal High School sends two students to the Kansas seminar each year.

This year, HOBY Kansas was conducted from Thursday, May 30 through Sunday at Kansas State University, and LHS students Vanessa Diazdeleon and Richard Calderon had the honor of being chosen as ambassadors for this fun yet educational convention.

Both ambassadors were compelled to apply for HOBY because they wanted to become better leaders. Diazdeleon said, “I’ve always been kind of a leader, even if I don’t want to be leading. I realized I needed to be able to set a good example all the time, whether I wanted to or not.”

Diazdeleon is also very strong in her faith, and she wanted to find ways to strengthen her youth group as well as her school.

“That’s kind of how I first went, of course, to get new skills to bring back to the school, but I went

looking for ways to use that to share Christ as well,” she stated.

The HOBY experience truly changes lives for the better, and these two students are no exception. Calderon discussed his own transformation.

“I was just kind of shy around everybody,” he said. “I was scared about meeting new people.”

However, HOBY quickly changed that.

“I learned that, if I have to meet new people, and if I get to recognize them, I’m very outgoing,” he added.

The two sophomores learned and adopted new skills over the weekend to help them lead in a way that will positively benefit the community.

“I learned lots of things; don’t be afraid to stand up for something, and be able to lead someone to greatness,” Calderon said.

As for her experience, Diazdeleon added, “It taught me how other people can view me. How I see determined and organized and everything, other people can see as arrogant and rude behavior, so I learned how to show my true colors in a better way.”

Both students highly recommend incoming sophomores to apply, and to begin working on the application early.

“It was worth it,” Calderon said. “If you really want to get into becoming a better leader, (HOBY) would be the best place to go.”

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