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## Fearless: Conor Brooks

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# Fearless: Conor Brooks

## **Abstract**

Recently named College Democrat of the Year for the entire state of Pennsylvania, **Conor Brooks '15** fearlessly advocates for political awareness, involvement, and participation, uses his leadership skills to affect change in Adams County, and helps break down stereotypes people have about the apathy and political illiteracy of college students.

## **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, politics, government, Democrat

## **Disciplines**

Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration

## **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

# SURGE

[ VERB ] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

## FEARLESS: CONOR BROOKS

April 25, 2014

Recently named College Democrat of the Year for the entire state of Pennsylvania, **Conor Brooks '15** fearlessly advocates for political awareness, involvement, and participation, uses his leadership skills to affect change in Adams County, and helps break down stereotypes people have about the apathy and political illiteracy of college students.

Conor grew up in a split political household where his mother was conservative and his father was liberal, which gave Conor the ability to form his own ideas about politics, giving him many opportunities to compare and contrast ideas, policies, and opinions. Through his involvement with the Center for Public Service this year as a Program Coordinator for the El Centro tutoring program, however, Conor has also come to understand a lot more about the places of privilege he was born into that have allowed him to succeed so much in the political sphere.

“Ever since I joined CPS where we have conversations about privilege and justice,” says Conor, “I’ve started to see just how many of the opportunities I’ve had are based on the fact that, honestly, I’m a recipient of every single type of privilege. I’ve gone to good schools, had plenty of support systems growing up, and haven’t had to worry about race or gender. But there are so many problems with the system where not everybody has the same opportunities. And for me, changing the system is about making it more equitable than equal. Not everyone starts in the same place, but everyone should have the option to reach a higher and better place.”

Conor’s political involvement in the Gettysburg College community, as well as Adams County as a whole, has been essential to the growth and transformation of how college students in the area have been getting involved in politics. Conor joined the Gettysburg College Democrats club his first year here at Gettysburg and knew right away that he wanted to change things. “At that point, there were only about six or seven members and we met weekly to talk about things, but I got frustrated that it never went farther than that. We didn’t encourage getting involved off campus, and there weren’t even a lot of things on campus to do.”

However, during his sophomore year, Conor became chair of College Dems and started getting involved in OFA (Obama for America/Organizing for Action) and the Adams County Democratic Committee (ACDC) off campus. At first, Conor had been advised not to try and get involved with groups like ACDC because people told him that



college students would never want to get involved in political organizations like that—that college students were too lazy to vote, didn't think their votes really mattered, and that it wasn't even worth trying to get students on campus registered to vote for the upcoming presidential and local elections.

But the pessimism and stereotypes of others didn't stop Conor from finding leaders in the College Dems group on campus, and working toward getting students on campus registered to vote. Conor became the staging location director for OFA that year, meaning that he was in charge of getting the vote out in Gettysburg. "We knew we needed to do something different to get people more involved," says Conor, "so we did a Voter Drive where we went door-to-door asking people if they wanted to register to vote.

And for the 2012 election, we registered 200 students, which was incredible since, before that, we usually only registered about 30 people every year. For a lot of people, that Voter Drive was a huge sign that there was a lot more going on on-campus than people had previously thought." Then, in 2013 when local elections came around, Conor and the College Dems were able to increase voter turnout by 40% in one four-year cycle.

During his junior year this year, Conor was recognized as the College Democrat of the Year for the entire state of Pennsylvania, an absolute honor. "In some ways," says Conor, "I feel like being recognized for this is a rebellion against the system that tells college students what we're supposed to do, what isn't worth our doing, and how involved with politics we're supposed to be."



But Conor's success and political involvement doesn't end there. Coming up on May 20, Conor will be on the ballot running for a position on the State Committee of Pennsylvania and, if elected, would be the lone representative of Adams County at the state level, voting and advocating for the county for the next four years.

"All it takes is getting involved," says Conor. "Get involved, and you're going to find amazing people on both sides of the aisle doing great things. Meeting them and realizing

that the whole game of politics is so much bigger than any one person can be, but that one people can still make so much difference has been an incredible process of learning for me. If you put your head down, do the footwork, and spend some late nights, there'll be great people, amazing opportunities, and so much passion about the issues along the way."

Doubtlessly an invaluable leader at Gettysburg College, Conor has helped make lasting changes on campus and in the community, challenging how people view college students, daring us to get involved and make our voices heard, and bringing more awareness about the importance of local politics.

**We congratulate you, Conor, on all your successes, and wish you luck on May 20 for election day!**

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