

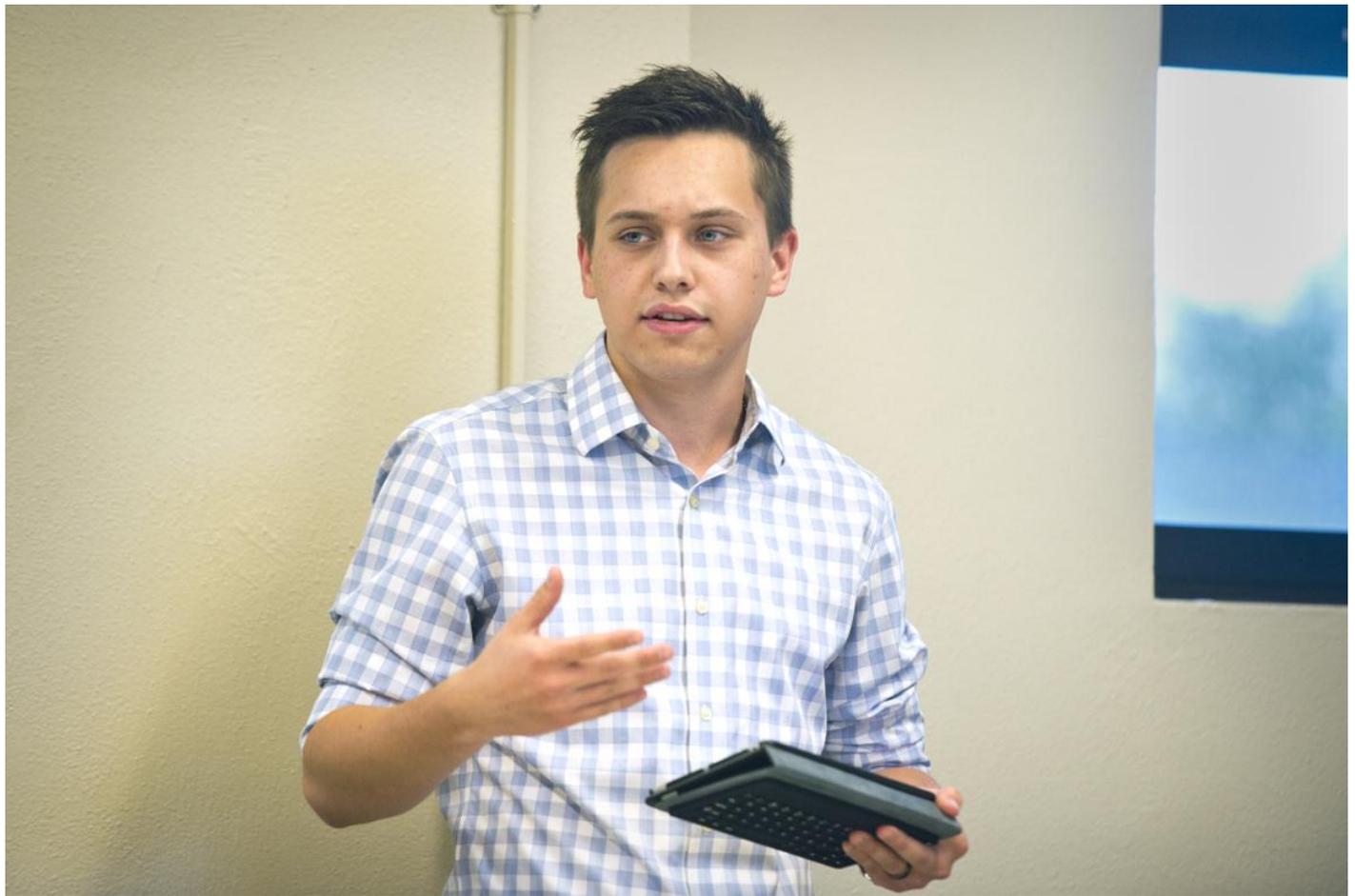
# THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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## Spokane Valley graduate says 'hello' card by card

Thu., June 4, 2015



**Gleb Liashedko, a senior at Spokane Valley High School, gives a presentation to the West Valley School Board on April 23. Liashedko is a student advisor to the West Valley School Board and is the notable senior from his school. (Jesse Tinsley)**

			
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**By Valerie Putnam**

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Handing out business cards isn't a practice you would expect from a high school student. But for Spokane Valley High School senior Gleb Liashedko it's business as usual.

"I'm meeting so many different people in the school and community," Liashedko, 18, said. "People kept asking me for business cards so I did it."

Liashedko's extensive involvement includes serving as the student ambassador on the West Valley School Board, chairman of the board for the Chase Youth Commission and SVHS chapter president of Junior Statesman of America.

He also serves as a youth leader at his church and chief financial officers for the Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

"'What's my personal impact as a citizen?' drives Gleb's desire to get involved," SVHS guidance counselor Suzanne Ruth-Scott said. "He wants to support students in earning a quality education and understanding civic responsibility."

Liashedko's zeal can be traced to growing up in the Ukraine. Immigrating to the United States at age 9, Liashedko remembers the persecution and regimented lifestyle of his homeland.

Liashedko's parents decided to immigrate to the United States to give their six children a better future. His mother left with the children as part of the last movement of Russian immigrants escaping Christian persecution. Liashedko's father has yet been unable to join them.

"My mother was on her own raising her kids," Liashedko said. "I had to step up and help support her."

The move brought struggles as Liashedko tried to fit into a different culture. Knowing only two English words, hello and watch, he worked hard to overcome a language barrier. Low-income, his family moved every two years – and Liashedko attended five different schools prior to high school.

“I couldn’t make any longterm friends,” Liashedko said about moving often. “Or find a place for myself.”

Pushed around and bullied, middle school was difficult. He chose to enroll at SVHS because of its nontraditional approach to learning.

Through support of teachers and staff, Liashedko slowly opened up and transformed into a strong leader.

“When I came in as a freshman, my head was down, typical shy kid,” Liashedko said. “This school helped crack my shell; I was able to open up. I found out I have many characteristics I didn’t know I had before.”

At the end of ninth grade, Liashedko ran for ASB president against an upper classman who was a leadership veteran. He won the race by two votes.

“My preparation and passion helped me win,” Liashedko said. “I was a role model for students as it doesn’t matter what age or who you are, you can achieve so much.”

Winning the election was the catalyst for Liashedko to get more involved. Since then, he works to pursue every opportunity.

Last summer through networking, Liashedko raised \$6,000 in two weeks to take Economics 211 class at Princeton University.

“At first, I thought this is impossible, how am I going to do this,” Liashedko said about reaching out to local businesses and service organizations. “As crazy as it sounds, I decided to pursue it.”

Upon his return, he started a chapter of the Junior State of America club at SVHS.

Liashedko also is very active in his church, being a youth leader and also preaching to the congregation occasionally.

“Faith is what drives me,” Liashedko said. “I wouldn’t have done anything without my faith.”

He plans to attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona – he’ll be the first of his family to attend college. He hopes to earn a business degree and eventually start his own airline.

“Back in the Ukraine, I dreamed of being a bus driver,” Liashedko said. “Here I’m dreaming of owning my own airline. Huge comparison of where I could have been if I was still living there.”

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