

## Virginia Tech Finishes 6<sup>th</sup> at National Soil Judging Championship

The 2017 Virginia Tech Hokies Soil Judging Team took sixth place overall out of 24 teams in DeKalb, IL on Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Soil Sci. Soc. America National Intercollegiate Soil Judging Contest. Ahead of the Hokies were Maryland, Kansas State, Wisc-Platteville, Purdue, and Wisc-Stevens Point. The individual judging team was led by Stephanie Duston (3<sup>rd</sup> out of 93 individuals) is a senior, ENSC major from Chantilly and now Christiansburg, VA. Her teammates are: Hunter Wyatt, a senior, Agriculture Science and Environmental Policy major from Sugar Grove, VA; Urban Samuel (Sam) Withers, senior BSE major from Asheville, NC; Robert Goodwin is a senior ENSC major from Midlothian, VA; Taylor Church, a senior ENSC major from Yorktown, VA; Elizabeth Gray, a senior Agronomy major (ENSC minor) from North Chesterfield, VA; Caitlyn Herron, a senior ENSC major; and new members Sabrina Vladu, Soph. ENSC major (water option) from Yorktown, VA; Chris Moritz, senior ENSC major from Gloucester, VA; and Cameron Bermand, a junior ENSC major (minors Horticulture and Chemistry) from Bedford, NH. It was the first contest for Vladu, Moritz, and Bermand. All students except the new members and Gray and Withers will graduate in May, 2017.



The 2017 Virginia Tech Hokies soil judging team (left to right): Cameron Bermand, Mike Badzmierowski, Taylor Church, Caitlyn Herron, Chris Moritz, Sam Withers, Stephanie Duston, John Galbraith, Elizabeth Gray, Rob Goodwin, Sabrina Vladu, and Hunter Wyatt. Duston finished behind Kristine Persing of Maryland, and Erin Bush of Kansas State. Behind Stephanie were Dan Brumm of Wisc-Platteville and Philip Schwartz of Maryland. Virginia Tech finished 8<sup>th</sup> in the group judging event. The top five teams in group judging were: Oklahoma State, Kansas State, Utah State, Maryland, and Bloomsburg University.

“This team put forth a very good effort” said Coach Galbraith. “They practiced two times per week, once in the classroom and once outside all semester. I am very proud of their effort and dedication in the week before finals. It was a sacrifice for all to miss a week of school, but I think they will tell you it was worth every minute.” Galbraith added, “The entire team learned a great deal about glaciated Mollisols and Alfisols in the corn belt west of Chicago. They learned as much as possible in one week about soil, agriculture, climate, soil genesis, and land use.” During the spring semester, some of the soil judges volunteered at the 2017 Potato Drop, which they sponsored, and competed in two escape rooms, escaping from both. The escape room in Chicago was very challenging, and the Hokies were only the third team ever to escape the “Pyramid Chambers” without using all of the free hints.



The Hokies enjoyed an escape room in Chicago as a team-building exercise before the competition.