

## **Ashleigh Bailey**

Two sentences on my project: Passion for something is the key to truly accomplishing a goal--my passion is for being Pro-Life. I was able to make a difference through volunteering with a Pro-Life pregnancy center and contributing my ideas in order to help those who struggle with the issue daily.

"Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation."-- Robert F. Kennedy

I was always very involved in clubs and activities in high school that allowed me to take on tremendous leadership roles, so when I received a letter involving training in that area I was interested to say the least. I enjoyed taking on these positions, but I also felt that in order to be successful I must learn skills and ideas I had never even thought of to improve my effectiveness. After applying and finally receiving the news that I had been accepted into the program, I was excited—but in no way had I prepared myself for the experience I was about to encounter.

Once orientation was out of the way and we were all getting to know each other, classes began and so did the learning process. Not only did I learn my personality type (an ENFP), I began to learn things that I was good at. I used to have the misconception that leaders were supposed to be able to take on any task and make it work—not true. Personally I have found that leadership is just the opposite, it most often results from a team of people contributing their talents and skills to make the ultimate finished product. It became clear to me that it's okay to ask for help, a concept I hadn't considered in the

past. Conflict-resolution skills, time management, and better communication are just a few of the ideas I will take with me from this class.

Besides the course discussions, there was a very vital element to this class that made the whole experience worthwhile—my individual leadership project. When choosing what part of the community or my life that I wanted to impact, I decided to pick something I felt very strongly about. Abortion has always been a big issue for me; I have always been Pro-Life, and after educating myself further over the last few years it has become my passion. I had all these ideas to promote my stance and feeling toward the subject, but finally decided that I should start at the ground level and become directly involved with people who are faced with this decision. After too many unreturned phone calls, I found an organization called Birthright, a pregnancy center that is pro-life and tries to do anything possible to make sure a girl can have her baby, no matter the circumstances. Through volunteering there and doing extra events to aid in their cause, such as a clothing drive through my sorority, I have gained a feeling of true accomplishment. Finding something I feel passionate towards and knowing that I can make a difference in the lives of just a few people who struggle with the issue is more rewarding than any title or award I could earn.

Our group project impacted me more than I could imagine. I was ecstatic when our group decided to try to make a difference in the homeless community—we would actually be working directly to help those who truly need assistance and receive instant gratification in feeling we were making a change. While all this occurred and more, I received an aspect that I hadn't considered—how close the service project brought the group itself. Painting kettles for the Salvation Army for close to six hours can really spark

some interesting conversation! Which brings me to what may be the best thing that has come out of this class—the friendships I will take. All of those involved came together for a specific purpose; to better themselves and make a difference. I will cherish the relationships I have built through ELI with my instructors, mentors, and classmates. They have all made a lasting impression on my life and for that I am grateful.

ELI has become a very important section in this chapter of my life, and I am confident that the knowledge I have gained will serve me throughout all my endeavors. I never expected a 3-hour credit course to make such an impact on how I view the world and myself. Anyone considering the course should stop considering and send in an application. It can truly be the first step to making your life and success and building relationships and making memories you will cling to throughout your life.