

Chad Clark

I am never one to say I am perfect by any means. I do possess certain qualities that make me unique and creative, but I never really made a valiant effort to bring those qualities out. I had the privilege of receiving an important piece of mail over the summer, which invited me to participate in the Emerging Leadership Institute. It was a program that I knew nothing about, and until I researched what the benefits of the program were, I didn't have much interest in learning more about it. I applied and was accepted, thus beginning a life-changing experience for me directly, and for my peers who I can now have a more positive influence on.

"He that would govern others, first should be the master of himself" --Philip Massinger

At our first ELI meeting, on an EARLY Saturday morning, my classmates and I retreated off campus to an isolated area to get to know one another. Obviously it would take more than an afternoon to really know the people in this Institute, as we all held so many qualities that would come out as the semester played out. One of the keys to ELI is what we encountered at our first set of meetings, when we learned more about our own personality types. I am a firm believer that you have to know yourself before successfully interacting with others. I learned that I am an ESFP, and I was the only one in the class with that personality type. An ESFP is a very spontaneous and competitive personality type to say the least, and I made it a goal of mine to use my personality to get the most out of my capabilities. I didn't want to have to change myself to benefit others, and ELI taught me that it was great to just be yourself, and in doing so you can effect many people in a positive light. On November 3, 2001, all of our different and unique personalities came together for a common good. We put in over 100 hours of service to our community, hopefully making that particular day, better for those involved in The Salvation Army. Over the semester we were facilitated in many aspects of the real world, including managing our time and making the most out of our day, conflict management and dealing with adversity, and appreciating diversity, which I believe is a growing necessity in our world today, as many new types of leaders including more women and minorities are taking on great leadership roles.

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power" - Abraham Lincoln

The combination of all of these elements taught me to appreciate more what true leadership is. There is a very thin line between what leadership is, and the notion of just being in charge of a situation. Leaders take everything into consideration, everyone who their decisions and choices affect, and all the possible outcomes, good and bad, that may come about as a result from their choices. Think about the quote from Abe Lincoln, that particular quote gave me the chills when I came across it. It's amazing how things that were spoken on so long ago, can still hold so true to this very day. Our ELI class took place on a day that changed the way our nation operated. On September 11, 2001, when terrorism took many lives, and threatened the freedom that our country has work so hard to achieve, the leadership of our nation was in question. Our president, who had been

scrutinized and mocked since taking office, would have to prove that he was worthy of his title, and step up and be the best leader to date. We were in a situation that we had never been in as a nation, and President Bush put our minds at ease. His actions defined what a real leader was. He led like we were being taught to. He erased the fear in our hearts and our heads with his words of encouragement, and his stern mannerism gave us a positive notion that we were going to overcome this adversity, and improve ourselves while we did it. These qualities are something I believe I can duplicate as a result of the ELI program.

"And the trouble is, if you don't risk anything, you risk even more"

As I previously stated, I was skeptical about the ELI program before I applied. I didn't know what exactly it was or what type of person is a member of such an elite group. I realized I wasn't an extremely good student, and I may put myself in a situation of being surrounded by many who were more dedicated than I was at the time. It was definitely a big risk for me to even apply to this institute. Another big part of the class was our individual service project. In this project I made an effort to design an outdoor learning facility. More importantly, I actually did something productive. I had never been one to have a set plan and stick with it, but this time once I got started, as I continued on, I developed a growing passion for this project. It taught me to be more responsible, and that the old adage is true, *"If you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything."* The skills that I have accumulated are skills that can't be taken away. I am now prepared to make a passion out of my life. To live each day to the fullest and with the most optimistic of approaches. I owe a lot to the ELI program; it was an amazing experience for which I am forever grateful.