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Final Paper

The Emerging Leader Institute. The “leadership” class that met twice a week from 2:30 to 4:30 that I chose to take as a freshman. Going into the first semester of my sophomore year, I was unsure of what to expect out of ELI. My last roommate, Megan Herde, enjoyed her experience with ELI a great deal. However the class did not normally come up in our everyday conversations. I remember asking her “what is this class about?” with her response always being some like “leadership” or “being a leader”. She never really elaborated very much on it. Looking back, I wonder if she was short about her explanation for a reason. Only after taking the class did I realize what a positive effect it has had on my abilities not only as a leader (which is one of the goals of the class), but as a person.

I have experienced many situations through ELI that I would not have otherwise. Beginning on the first day when we drew pictures of houses that were “built” on what we stand for as individuals. After my other classmates presented their houses, I realized that I needed to reevaluate some of my morals and standards, not because they were wrong, but because they were slightly childish and in some ways selfish. I gained the knowledge throughout this class that one quality a leader should not demonstrate is selfishness. Another example of a beneficial experience I am taking away from this class was with Ronda Strouse. She had each student complete surveys which in turn created

our very own individual leadership profile. I realized that because of my “dominant personality” there were aspects of my personality that would not be useful in my quest to enhance my ability to lead. Because I was able to realize and understand my “faults”, the ways in which I lead have been positively influenced.

However, there are primarily two situations to which I can attribute most of my growth as a leader due to being a part of this class. These two experiences were the class leadership project as well as my own individual leadership project. The class project of heading a get-together for Refugees was one of the most educational experiences for me not only as a student, but as a person. During the beginning stages of planning for our activity, I was very unsure of how it would turn out. I was part of a committee that did not elect a “committee head” because we felt like everyone was able to do the same amount of work. Now when using a “leaders point of view”, in retrospect I think that not having a head member in my committee was a poor call. I was extremely anxious about the outcome of the project a few days before the actual project itself due to last minute planning and the sheer reality that because of the Refugees situation, they may not even be able to attend the event due to their geographical location. Although, when my class mates all met a few hours before to set up and get everything ready for the guests, I realized that it had all come together nicely. Then at the time when the Refugees and their children arrived at Goodbarn, I instantly knew that what our class had decided to do for our leadership project was going to be a huge success.

Seeing children that have come from such traumatizing backgrounds smile and seem happy and full of life and excitement was extremely rewarding as a leader/mentor. Because of my sheltered upbringing, I had never been exposed to children

or adults with those situational backgrounds. Listening to the horrible experiences the families had to go through before coming to the United States was humbling and at the same time slightly ill at ease. I felt spoiled to have been raised in a suburban-like environment for most of my life and awful that I have never had to go through any kind of traumatic experiences close to what the Refugees dealt with. Communication with the adult Refugees was naturally harder than conversation with an American adult; however they were very appreciative to us and interested in what we had to say. The purpose of our project was to throw the Refugees a welcoming party, and our class did so successfully. When the Refugee families left, you could see the enthusiasm about America and American traditions in their eyes. Below is a picture of our class after completing our day at Goodbarn.



This was not my only significantly rewarding learning experience while enrolled in ELI. My second most important educational activity was my individual leadership project. I mulled over the many possibilities of projects for days at a time. I knew I wanted to do some kind of fundraiser or drive on campus for some non-profit organization. After attending a sorority meeting about self defense, I realized that I wanted to hold a campus wide activity to help women in need. Because of the rising crime rate today, it is extremely important for women to feel as though they can protect themselves if they ever find themselves in a dangerous situation. Raising women's awareness of the real possibilities of danger and how easily women are attacked is essential.

While keeping all this in mind, I contacted the Women's Place (a new organization on campus dedicated to raising awareness about violence against women) about this opportunity and they were extremely excited and immediately willing to help. After a good deal of discussion, it was decided that the best possible way for me to take action was to hold a two week drive with the goal of obtaining old cell phone and cell phone chargers. The used materials will then be converted into 9-1-1 cell phones and will be distributed to women in need within the Lexington community. In looking for outlets to get educate the campus about my drive, I contacted the Kentucky Kernel. An

article was then written describing my cell phone and cell phone charger drive.



(To the Right)

To ensure that the drive will continue indefinitely, a drop off box will continue to be located in Frazee Hall (the building in which the Women's Place resides) for recurrent drop offs.

In taking on and coordinating this drive, I developed a tremendous amount as a leader. My philosophy of what it takes to be a leader has changed as well. I now believe that it to be a successful leader; you must be an individual who is committed to a project that will better not only yourself, but others. A leader must also have the qualities of being knowledgeable of their audience, timely, patient, creative, inspiring, clear about their vision, and productive. This definition is what I believe for the time being. I hope that with all of the wisdom I have gained from my experiences with the Emerging Leader Institute I will be able to then be the catalyst of positive change for the future.