

Amanda Cook

The Emerging Leader Institute

I applied to the Emerging Leaders Institute after reading an article in the Lexington Herald about this special class. I had been very active in high school, and I was hoping that this class would help me to get more involved on campus here at the University of Kentucky. I was so excited when I got the phone call telling me that I had been accepted into the class and received our syllabus. The syllabus gave just enough information about every lecture to make it interesting, but kept us wondering what each class would actually be about.

During the orientation we were also divided up into mentor groups. We were required to meet with these mentor groups each week to discuss things in the class, come up with a group project idea, and to help each other with individual projects. My student mentor was a great help.! She told us things to expect during the class, and was able to tell us mistakes that were made last year so we could avoid them. My adult mentor was a great help with or individual project. She was always willing to give helpful suggestions. Our mentor groups also had a list serve where we e-mailed each other each week. This was a great way for our group to communicate. At times, we would need a suggestion before the meeting and the list serve was a good way to go about it.

Our first actual class was one of my favorite for the whole year. Ms. Rhonda Strouse met with us and helped us see our leadership personality. It was neat to see characteristics of the other students as well as my own. After our discussion, it was amazing to see how the things that were said about my own personality were so true. During the rest of the course we had many people come in and speak to us about topics

that interest me such as: Enhancing Communication in Leadership, Moral and Ethical Decision Making, and Conflict Management.

One of the course requirements is to do a group community service project. We came up with the date for our project at our orientation meeting, and then came up with the ideas among our mentor groups. We presented these ideas to the rest of the class, and then voted on our favorite. We ended up deciding on going to the Bob Brown House, which is a handicap facility for fifteen residents. On a rainy Sunday afternoon, our class drove to the Bob Brown House where we helped with landscaping and also played games with the residents. This was a great experience for us all. The people at the Bob Brown House were very appreciative and I left feeling like I had accomplished a lot. I was so glad that we chose this specific project. Our class really pulled everything together by getting donations and being willing to help on that day.

Another class requirement was an individual project. This project had no restriction and we weren't really given any ideas to start with. I know that I struggled trying to figure out what I wanted to do. I knew that I wanted to help children, but I didn't know how to go about doing this. I decided to do something for the UK Children's Hospital. After meeting with the Child Life Coordinator at the hospital, I decided on, what I am calling, "treasure chests" for the children. To accomplish this project, I wrote many local businesses and asked for donation such as games, toys, puzzles, etc. to give out to the children to keep. By doing this project, I realized many things about myself. I realized that even when things don't go as you plan, you can't let that get you down. I also learned to be persistent with what I want to accomplish. I glad that his class gave me the

opportunity to help others. This project really made me feel good about myself, and I hope that it made the children at the hospital happy at the same time.

The greatest part of this class was the students. Every individual in the class added something unique to every discussion. I learned so much from each person. Seeing other leaders' characteristics showed me ways that I can better myself in my own personal leadership. Being in the Emerging Leaders Institute was one of the best things I have done since attending the University of Kentucky. I would recommend anyone who is interested in any type of leadership position to apply for this class. I think everyone can benefit from it.