

DJ Geddes

"Leaders are ordinary people with extra ordinary determination"

Hello, my name is DJ Geddes and I was a participant in the 2000 Emerging Leader Institute. You are probably reading this to see what my perspective of this class was, and how my leadership skills have improved as a result of partaking in this awesome experience. First, I would like to clarify how hard this experience is to put into words, but I will do the best that I can. Throughout my page you will find various quotes about leadership, which I hope will help describe the various definitions of what leadership is, I will tell you a little about the class, and what I did and will continue to do.

"We have been given two ears but a single mouth in order that we may hear more and talk less." -Zeno of Citium"

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being." -John Wolfgang von Goeth

Ok, so I may be what you call reserved. I don't always voice my opinion, but I always have one. My leadership style is one that allows me to absorb what others have to say, and then I try to blend all the ideas into one superior idea. You may have the false impression that a leader is one that is only authoritative and leads by dictatorship. Well actually leaders come in all sorts of forms, which you will find out in ELI. The different people you will meet while in the institute are amazing and wonderful. The uniqueness of everyone shows that everyone is truly a leader in his or her own regards. The class has taught me how to look for leadership qualities in everyone, and hopefully incorporate those characteristics to accomplish whatever is at hand.

"Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it is the only thing."
-Al Schweitzer

"To lead the people, walk behind them."-Lao Tzu

"As we look ahead into the next century,
leaders will be those who empower others." -Bill Gates

Leaders are individuals that work for others, and lead to produce results for others and not for selfish reasons. Without followers, a leader is nothing. A shepherd is not a leader if he has no flock. As leaders, we must always keep in mind the ideas and feelings of those who are following. A leader wants to make him or herself credible, and can only do this if he is willing to be compassionate about others.

"I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow."-Woody Wilson

"Our greatest glory is not in never failing but in rising every time we fail." -Confucius

In order for someone to be a leader, he must take initiative. Along with initiative comes responsibility and commitment. Through ELI you will learn that leaders are responsible for actions they undertake, and must be committed to fulfill what they start. However, before going through ELI, I don't know if I had the initiative to create, plan and complete a service project on my own. So, ELI has made me aware of my potential and that yes, I can do something on my own. I don't mean like cooking my own meal or tying my shoes. I mean something like making Lexington restaurants more aware of the dangers of secondhand smoke, and urging them to become smoke-free, which was my individual leadership project that I will discuss later. I guess I am trying to say that ELI has given me some sort of drive to want to change the world I live in, along with the confidence that I can make that change.

"The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other (people)
the conviction and will carry on."-Walt Lippman

With this quote I would like to tell you some of the things I did while in the class, and what I plan on doing in the future. The class is a simple class, one with a friendly

atmosphere, and easy objectives. You will be surrounded by a dynamic, yet goal oriented group of people. Everyone enters ELI to make themselves better leaders, but leaves making themselves better people. The class allows you to form bonds with 25 other freshman and sophomores, and also provides sessions throughout the semester where you will learn:

- of your own personality and leadership style
- how to communications as a leader
- how to make moral and ethical decisions
- how to handle conflict as a leader
- how to be aware of everything that is happening through means of meditation
- how to appreciate diversity

The class does have some requirements however, but these are also simple if you work at them. While at ELI you must complete both the Group Community Service Project along with your own Individual Project. This may seem overwhelming and impossible to complete in a measly semester, but is really easily accomplished.

For our group community service project we went to the Bob Brown House, a housing complex for the physically and mentally challenged. There we worked with the residents helping to improve their house by reshaping and reworking the landscape to make it more beautiful and beneficial to the residents. We also interacted with the residents by playing games and just having conversations with those who needed someone to talk with. By attending and completing this project, I believe the class as a whole learned that we could accomplish a task as a group. We blended the leadership skills of the group to produce positive results, and had a great time doing so.

As for my individual leadership project I chose to write letters to Lexington restaurants urging them to become smoke-free. During the process I interviewed Joe

Bologna, owner of the smoke free restaurant Joe Bologna's, and also attended a meeting of the Bluegrass ACTION Team, a committee formed to encourage restaurants to provide smoke-free environments. From my experience in working on this project I learned that dedication and persistence pays off. I learned that others are interested in your success, and that they give helpful information along with needed motivation to assist you in all that you do. I learned that it is actually easy to do a project such as this, and that if everyone tried to do something to better the community, our world would become a much better place. I learned that although everyone does possess different personalities and leadership styles, we are all capable of making a positive difference in whatever we endeavor.

So, now that I have gone through the ELI process, what will I do now? Well, leadership like life is a continual process. I will learn more about leadership by observing others, making mistakes of my own, and achieving goals that I set for myself. I will try to make others believe that they too possess what it takes to be a leader, and encourage them to take the initiative. I believe everyone is a leader in their own way. It just takes time and courage to let it shine through. And also what I will do is encourage those freshmen and sophomores who are legible to apply for this class as it will be an experience you will never forget.

I want to take this time to thank all participants in ELI, especially to Elizabeth Bates and Lauren Smith for making this great experience possible. My deepest thanks to you!