

## **Sarah Lucas**

### *ELI: A Unique Experience*

When I first turned in my application for ELI (the Emerging Leader Institute), I was excited at the chance to get to take this class, yet I had no idea what this class was about. After I got the phone call that I had been accepted, I was jumping for joy, but still confused as to what this class was. I knew that the class was the chance for me to grow as a leader, but how they could create a whole class on becoming a leader was beyond me. Now that I am nearing the end of the semester, I feel more confident of myself as a leader. I have grown as a leader through the class time, group leadership project and individual leadership project.

ELI met twice a week for two hours. Each week we had a different subject. Each of our presenters forced us to challenge our definition of a leader. We learned how our actions can effect others. We even learned how our personality can help or hinder a situation. I learned that even when I don't want to, I need to let people know what I think. Another important thing I learned is that in order to understand someone, you have to first understand where they are coming from. Every presenter taught us something that we may not have known and that pretty much everything adds to what kind of leader you are.

One of the requirements of the class was to do a group project. For our project we went to the Bob Brown House in Lexington and did some landscaping for them. Landscaping was something that I had next to little previous experience with. I really had no idea what I was doing, but the lesson I learned was something I will take with me for the rest of my life. I realized that my limitations are only what I set on myself. I knew

that I didn't have enough landscaping experience to instruct others, but I could listen to those that did know and then do my part. The lesson I learned was that no matter how much previous experience you have in an area, if you are willing to help there is someone out there willing to help you in return, but it is up to you to find that person.

Another requirement of the class was to do an individual leadership project. For my project, I went over to my alma mater, Lafayette High School, and volunteered to tutor in Math. The math department had after school study halls twice a week. The problem is that too many students come to the study halls for each of them to get the one on one attention that they need. I know that my help with the study halls doesn't cure the problem, but at least it is the first step. After going to Lafayette once a week, I have gotten to know some of the students. They ask me questions about math and college and anything else that they think I can help them with. I realize that this is just the first step, but in the future I hope to get more college students involved in helping high school students.

Throughout this semester, in everything we have done, one question keeps coming up: "What makes a leader?" In today's world, the word leader is hard to define, but this semester has helped me get closer to defining a leader. I have learned in every situation the kind of leader that is needed is different. Through my experience in ELI, I have learned that a leader is someone who has made a difference in another's life. A leader is someone who is willing to put himself or herself at risk to make the world better. Leaders can happen on the basis of a one to one relationship, or you could be a leader to someone that you have never met before.