

Amanda Black

ELI; when one first hears these three letters, one wonders, as I did, exactly what it means. What exactly does ELI stand for? Well, first of all: the Emerging Leaders Program. But, more importantly, it also stands for training, learning, bonding, and responsibility. This program has been beneficial in so many ways. It has opened doors for me that were under lock and key. I say this because before I joined the ELI team, I questioned my ability to lead. Now, I have no doubt, due to my analysis from the Myers Briggs instrument, that I am a fully competent and qualified leader, just like everybody else that has the drive. If anybody wants to succeed in life, they need to be a part of a team, whether it is the leader or followers, both are equally important. I experienced this mostly in my individual leadership project. At the beginning of the semester, I had serious doubts in my ability to accomplish this requisite. But, with the push of my small peer mentor group, the support of the entire class, and the personal connection I had towards my project, I started out with a book drive and through many different obstacles, rearranged my individual project into a library scavenger hunt. I have not had as many difficulties as some of the people in my class, but I have had my share. It has been more than worth the effort though. I have gained so much from my experience as a leader in my individual project, not to mention the group project. There have been so many wonderful aspects of my ELI experience. The weekly peer mentor meetings were very crucial to the experience as a whole. Without these meetings, I probably would not have been able to complete my individual project. I had two great mentors, who interrogated me and the rest of my group members, but pushed us beyond our comfort zone. The weekly sessions that focused on the different aspects of leading were also very helpful,

all of them being important. There was the diversity section, the organizational session, the mindfulness and creativity session, and especially the conflict and mediation session. These sessions all intertwined and created the wonderful experience that ELI promises in its mission statement. After going through the Emerging Leader Institute, I believe that I will be better aware of the individuals that I will (hopefully) one day be leading.

Because of my experience with the game in the diversity session, I will take a step back and really examine closely the situation that I am in and the situation that the other person (s) is/are in also. From my individual leadership project I am planning on volunteering in the elementary school that I have worked with and from my passion of reading, have realized that my career has to be focused around reading or books. Instead of volunteering at the local hospital this summer, I plan on helping out at the community library. Altogether, from my ELI experience, I have taken a real world grasp on my life. I will live my life, not just for me and my happiness, but for others also. I don't exactly want to live for others' happiness, but to help and aid in the happiness of other people.

On the same lines, I also learned a lot from the presentations of the other members of the class. I learned about their passions and what really mattered to them, as individuals. It was very interesting to see what they held so high in their lives that they did their individual project on it. I enjoyed the presentations also because they forced one to look at the world through my classmates' eyes. Brandon did an especially great job of opening my eyes to the problem of homelessness. It was also inspirational to see quiet Beatrice fully succeed in her project, overcoming more obstacles along the way (including her shyness), than I could have handled in a million years. I have gained so much positive influence from the various types of presenters and individuals that are a

crucial part of the entire experience of the Emerging Leaders Institute as a whole. I want to especially thank Elizabeth and Barb for their complete dedication to their job of educating the next generation of (WONDERFUL!) leaders. You guys have done so much more than is required of you, I know, and I think that I represent the entire (past and present) class of ELIers when I say, "Thank you, Thank you, THANK YOU!"