

## **Lauren Rose**

As Emerging Leader Institute started, they asked us to bring in three items that said something about us as individuals. Already I was being asked to look into myself, the person that I was, and the person I wanted to become. It was so amazing to see what each person brought, and how such a small item could speak so much for the person they were. From the beginning this class asked me to look into myself and recognize and appreciate the differences that made us all individuals and leaders in our own right. As the program continued each session whether it be a class or a group mentor meeting asked me to use the knowledge I was gaining to grow as a person and stretch myself both mentally and physically. My leadership project forced me to address my weaknesses and gave me a stage to use my strengths. My final presentation gave me the opportunity to reflect back on my experience, the obstacles I had overcome, and the progress I had made in only a few short months. Now as the semester is coming to close I am finally beginning to realize the impact this program has had on me as so much more than a leader, but simply as a person.

Entering a program called Emerging Leader Institute, I wanted to be sure that I stood out. In this sea of potential leaders I didn't want to get lost in the crowd; however what I quickly came to realize is that no one no matter what their leadership style or manner could out shadow another. We were twenty-four individuals that all wanted to grow as people and learn about ourselves. Over the semester I discovered that it wasn't enough to be aware of your weaknesses, this was only the first step. Once I had discovered them it was up to me to make the conscience effort to remedy them. I knew that I tended to shy away from conflict, and that I was generally rather timid in dealing

with adults. It has been my experience that my leadership project was really the place where the most growth occurred. This was the arena in which I applied everything I had learned in class. By working with a nonprofit organization run entirely by adults for my leadership project I was forced to face this fear, and conquer it. By dealing with different organizations and choosing which one would benefit most from my efforts, I ran into conflicts that were unavoidable, and seeing that I survived these unscathed I realized that conflict does not need to be a negative thing, and in many cases is necessary for development.

If someone were to ask me today what I learned through my experience with Emerging Leader, I would say without a hesitation, self discovery. Emerging Leader taught me how to appreciate my strengths, and how to mend my weaknesses. It showed me that leadership is not always about being the head of a major corporation, and a hero isn't always some one who is known world wide. Everything can happen on a small scale or on a local level and that doesn't make it any less heroic, and the person who leads by example is no less strong as the person who leads by force. Leadership is what you make it. It can be honest or it can be corrupt. It can be glorified or it can be taken with a dose of modesty. I can be leader, and so can the boy who sits next to me in Chemistry. A wonderful lesson of Emerging Leader was the realization that leadership has no certain shape. Leadership lies inside the person and because each person is unique, so to is their idea and form of leadership.

This is why self discovery is so important. I had to realize what I stood for, what I wanted to be about, before I could begin to build my leadership style. If someone finds themselves in a leadership position before this discovery has taken place, they will be a

shaky leader, easily swayed and unsure of themselves. I have come to learn that to lead others I need to be able to relate to them, and I can't relate to them, until I can honestly relate to myself. I am a person who loves encouragement and needs it. I am honest and expect the same out of others. Through the Myers-Briggs test I discovered I am an extrovert, and thrive off people. All of these things were things I never realized applied to my leadership style until Emerging Leader. Every aspect of a person makes them the leader that they become, and because of this the more I know about myself, the better leader I have the ability to be.

From this experience I walk away with a new found confidence, not only in myself but also in my peers. I realize that we all have the power to make a difference, and we all have the visions to evoke change. I am not simply a nineteen year old college student with no power or influence. I am a passionate person who can and will make a difference in this world, even if it is just in the life of one person. As I move on from this program I am mindful of my abilities, my strengths and weaknesses, my needs and wants, and most importantly who I am, and who I still want to become. Self discovery is a never ending process, but it takes an event to start the journey and Emerging Leader was my event.