

HOW TO INSPIRE FELLOW STUDENTS TO VOLUNTEER

Hawaii cannot afford to wait until young people are grown up before they understand or learn about society's problems, take action, and have an impact. My fellow students are inspired to volunteer by common purpose, the opportunity to lead, and the possibility of solving today's problems.

An understanding about our community problems is like a call to action inspiring our youth. Like directions on a map, common purpose can take people where they want to go, but it can also show them where they are and what needs to be done to solve our communities' most challenging problems. For example, I was recently shocked to discover a shanty town of 5,000, or more, homeless persons and their families living in makeshift tents and cardboard huts on Ala Moana Beach Park while cataloging a photo essay on pollution. When my fellow students and literature teacher saw my work, most of them were equally shocked and ignorant to the fact that such abject poverty existed under the Waikiki skyline, only a few blocks from wealthy tourists. Our class discussion that day then revolved around what we could do to solve the problem of homelessness, and inspired a volunteer campaign we believe in. Today, three of my classmates and I are applying for a ten thousand dollar grant to start the second only high school Campus Chapter affiliated with Habitat for Humanity in the entire state of Hawaii with the expressed charter of bringing our student body together to serve the underprivileged.

Leadership requires but one person to set the example, and in turn inspire others to action. I recently asked my school advisor what volunteer opportunities were available, and was told to see my class president to work on a homecoming committee. She didn't understand what I meant by volunteer. The truth is, there simply are no service organizations at most schools that exist to serve their communities. So to connect Hawaii teens with the opportunity to volunteer,

our long term plan for a Campus Chapter establishes branch affiliates with other high schools to form a student network and volunteer community that facilitates selfless service to causes everyone is passionate about. To sustain our efforts by inspiring the next generation of volunteers, our Campus Chapter establishes a mentorship program where juniors and seniors educate, influence, and motivate freshman and sophomores to do something about their issue of interest. Although leadership requires but one person to initiate action, the opportunity to lead solutions for individual causes best harnesses teen energies, perspectives, gifts, and understanding as directors in finding solutions for today's challenges.

It is unlikely that Hawaii's problems will be solved today, but unless its' youth are inspired to volunteer now, my generation will also fail to solve those problems in the future. What is required to connect Hawaii's youth with the need to volunteer is common purpose, opportunity to lead, and the possibility of solving today's problems now.