

To begin with, please accept my apologies for not being here in person today. The Manhattan High girls' golf team has a tournament in Hutchinson today and it is important to my team that I play. I wish I could be here to share my experience, but I hope to sum up my experiences in this letter.

Bright and early on a beautiful June Sunday, I headed out on an adventure that I won't soon forget. I arrived at the KU campus to be greeted by a rather peppy group of college students in party hats and snow cones in hand. I wasn't sure what to think at this point. I set up my room and waited for my roommate to arrive. She seemed to be the absolute last person to register that day. At the introductory meeting, we were told that throughout the week, the action team was going to challenge us mentally. The first challenge seemed like a breeze. We were to watch the movie "Footloose," and find all of the different aspects of leadership throughout the movie. No problem, I thought, I've seen that movie a dozen times. Boy, was I wrong. I don't think I have ever focused and absorbed so much from one movie.

Mondays have never been a friend to me, but I kept positive as we boarded the bus and headed out to our 2nd leadership challenge, the KU Challenge Course. Upon arriving, we split into teams and rotated through different physical obstacles such as the tire swings and a rope spider web. The goal was to be able to communicate with each other and work together to accomplish our goal of completing each project. I got a few bumps and bruises along the way, but my team was able to accomplish all but one course. We had tested our limits, worked together, and thought outside the box. Later in the afternoon, we had the opportunity to listen to a panel of student leaders who told us about how they were able to get involved in different activities around campus and how they developed into the leaders they are today.

Tuesday was our community service project day. I was in a group that visited a local nursing home. We were able to talk to and exercise with a group of very happy and talkative seniors. I was able to spend about an hour alone visiting a lady who is turning 100 in November. She told me that she was delighted to talk with me because she gets very lonely. This was a very positive experience for me. To see the joy on her face gave me feel one of the best feelings that I have ever had. Tuesday afternoon, we had a guest speaker talk to us about our "true colors." It was a personality test that identified you as orange, yellow, blue, or green. I scored mostly orange, which means I'm energetic and creative. This quiz allowed us to identify others that share common personalities with us, but it also taught us that it's okay to have a variety of personalities when working on a project.

On Wednesday morning, we went to the Kansas Union and listened to Dr. Barbara Ballard, a professor at the University of Kansas. She challenged us to use our leadership skills to the best of our abilities, to work for everything, and to not be afraid to succeed. I could sit and listen to her talk all day. I really felt that I took a lot from her presentation. In the afternoon, we tie-dyed a shirt which was really fun because I love to tie-dye! The point of this exercise was to show that everyone is different and that diversity can be awesome! We then listened to Rueben Perez, a KU professor, talk about differences of opinion and working together with people who think or

feel differently than us. This was a really interesting class because he explained that to be a good leader you have to be able to work with lots of different people and you can't just ignore them because they have ideas different than yours.

Thursday was the last day at RYLA and it was bitter sweet. All week long we had been breaking into small groups in order to learn how to put our heads together to come up with a solution to a problem or to make decisions. At the closing ceremony, each group gave a presentation about a problem that had been presented to them earlier in the week. Polio awareness was the theme for each problem. My group was faced with the dilemma of a young girl whose home in Africa is greatly affected by polio every year. Her classmates planned to have an auction to raise money for the cure for polio, but all of the items to be sold were stolen. Our job was to figure out how we would deal with this situation. Each person talked about different aspects of one central idea. The day ended with us being presented graduation certificates and given heartfelt good byes.

RYLA changed me. I became a better leader and person. I was able to soak in all of the learning experiences during the week and can now use those experiences in my everyday life as a member of the Manhattan High School Student Council, president of my 4-H club, youth group leader, and where ever else possible. I am truly thankful that the Manhattan Rotary Club allowed me to be a part of such an awesome experience. I learned more in 5 days than I could have ever learned anywhere else in the same amount of time.

Leadership is a skill that a lot of people possess, but few people use to the best of their abilities. I have kept in touch with many of the people that I met during the week. I constantly think back to the lessons that I learned. I can't possibly fit everything thing we did into this letter, but I hope that I gave you a glimpse into one of the best weeks of my life. I could spend all day talking about this camp, but I believe I've already gone over the time limit. Thank you so much for everything you have done for me. I will never forget this.