

Leadership in the mountains of CO and shores of CT and RI

A Parents Dream

Two years ago, Kiira and Bryce Walsh were provided an opportunity that has greatly impacted their lives and the lives of many around them. In a weekly all school meeting at Fountain Valley School of Colorado, two students stood in front of the entire school and shared stories about a camp they had attended the previous year called Grab the Torch. Both my daughter and son approached me after the meeting and asked if I would support them in applying to attend. They said it was a “philanthropy” camp and while it didn’t sound all that “fun”, it did sound interesting to them. They were impressed by how confident their classmates were in front of the entire school and wanted to gain some of the same confidence and leadership skills while learning about the world of philanthropy. Of course I supported them in attending but had no idea the real impact it would have on them.

While I have always felt Kiira and Bryce were kind and compassionate, I had no idea that the two teens I dropped off on Sunday afternoon would experience such a dramatic transformation by week’s end. The drive home was filled with smiles, laughter, and endless stories about the many speakers, their new found friends, and the creation of a new community of young people who believe they possess the drive to make big differences in the world. And by the way, the word “fun” came up repeatedly. It wasn’t until later in the week that I noticed a fundamental change in their attitude and expression of gratitude for what they have and the opportunities they have been afforded. Suddenly, I had kids who asked if they could help in the house. Offered help to neighbors, friends and family. There existed a feeling of community within our own home that I had no idea existed.

Dave Aldrich was kind enough to allow the kids to attend a second camp in Connecticut later that summer. This time Kiira and Bryce went into the camp with an understanding of exactly what they were about to experience and a confidence that they were proud to wear. Again, the experience proved to be unforgettable. They were greatly moved by a day trip to “Hole in the Wall Camps” where children experiencing life threatening illnesses have access to an overnight camp experience that many healthy kids can easily experience in hundreds of camps around the country. One of Kiira and Bryce’s goals is to one day volunteer at the camp. That experience had a profound impact on them and every time they speak about it, even a year later, they possess a passion that I don’t often see in young people.

Last fall, Kiira and Bryce became those students who stood in front of their entire school and personally invited their fellow students to join them and to apply to the Camp. I was lucky enough to be in attendance and the two young people who stood in front of me oozed confidence, leadership, and compassion. I couldn't be more thankful to Dave Aldrich and the Grab the Torch leadership group for empowering Kiira and Bryce to not only live a life they love, but to also be a part of a community that ultimately assists others to achieve great things.

Last summer Bryce and Kiira took part of their vacation time, along with another Grab the Torch member, Douglas Adams and a fellow school mate to volunteer in Mexico at Children of the Dump. They continue to gather goods to assist the children and plan to volunteer their time every trip they take to the area. Bryce is spending a year abroad and plans to start a community project in Viterbo, Italy that will address the needs of philanthropic ventures in all communities. Grab the Torch is responsible for opening the eyes of my children and for providing them with the tools, confidence and leadership skills they need in order to make a difference. Bryce was just elected to the 30/30 Council at GTT. He was selected because he wanted to bring the spirit of Grab The Torch to Europe for his year abroad.

Thank you Dave and Grab the Torch.