The Service that S.H.A.P.E.s Lives

The concept of service is a topic that merits further exploration. In the context of principle and function, service can be explained through S.H.A.P.E: Spirit, Heart, Adventure, Power and Existence. Spirit in terms of the [Holy] Spirit that serves as a personal guide in everyday experiences; Heart as regards to the love and health of an individual; Adventure in reference to occurrences that define ones conclusive experience; Power being the strength acquired and exercised by an individual; and Existence as the externalized figure that illustrates a person’s entire being. Together these five interchangeable words spell S.H.A.P.E and within this frame, I believe service S.H.A.P.E.s lives.

As a second year Site Leader for the Center for Community Research and Engagement (CCRE), I’ve been boundlessly positioned to utilize and maximize my ability to S.H.A.P.E the lives of those with whom I come into contact. CCRE was created in 1997 to coordinate the activities of Seton Hall University as it implements service learning and community-based research on campus. In manifesting its vision, I was placed at Maplewood Middle School during my first year as a Site Leader where I oversaw a number of freshmen volunteers, in addition to implementing afterschool activities. For example, connect four tournaments, double-dutch, and guitar hero challenges for the kids involved in HUB program. After three months of service, I was offered a permanent position as a Site Leader for CCRE. Enthused about the opportunity, I agreed to come back and help the center.

Initially thrilled, my second year brought on more challenges than anticipated. This was due to the increase in students who volunteered through the center, the increase in sites that I was given to supervise, and my new position as the Public Relations Campaign Manager. These responsibilities inevitably forced me to learn the importance of time management and enhanced my listening skills. With many more students, I called upon the [Holy] Spirit to assistance me in making decisions: many of which were unexpected. For example the unreliable bus
transportation that arrived late for pick up and/or drop-off, almost every day of the week, challenged my ability to make quick and rational decisions on behalf of the center. Being that I was responsible for three sites, listening became a helpful technique in making sure that volunteers were able to express any concerns or ask questions regarding service. Listening certainly allowed me to cultivate a personal relationship based on the notion of Heart with the volunteers, whereas in my previous year, the task was less demanding and challenged little to no skill sets. By the end of the second month, volunteers including myself looked forward to going to the sites. It was an Adventure that brought about new tasks on a daily basis. Needless to say, the smiles on the students faces made all for a grand experience. By the end of the semester each volunteer felt Power in their internal and external being. Their ability to change lives by devoting 3 hours a week to tutor and engage with young children in after school programs without a doubt defined their existence as humans, and they knew this! Certainly, their Existence is what makes the Center for Community Research and Engagement a viable volunteer program.

In addition to CCRE, I am a recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King Scholarship (MLKSA). In honoring and manifesting the dreams of the late Dr. King, scholars are highly involved in community service. From food banks to programs on campus, we serve all communities. Opportunities initiated both by CCRE and MLKSA test my growth in all aspects; I am able to use what I learn in both settings for the furtherance of both organizations and in my pursuit to run my own Media Company. Through these two organizations, I have learned to S.H.A.P.E. my personal life by way of service.

This notion of service can be seen more unequivocally through Jesus Christ. He defines a true Servant Leader. As a Christian pursing the lifestyle of Jesus Christ, I reflect on his time on earth where he served his people wholeheartedly. Jesus became a leader through his service, for example when he healed the Official’s Son (John 4:43-54), when he healed the disabled at the pool (John 5:1-14), or even the most remembered scripture, when he helped his disciples catch
an overflow of fish (John 21:1-14). Jesus is the epiphany of the cliché but accurate quote “lead by example,” and his legacy illustrates what I define as a Servant Leader. His disciples followed because he S.H.A.P.E.d their lives through service.

In my final thought, similar to Jesus, I too desire to live a life of service. More specifically, I dream of owning my own media company. Currently called YUSHAPE LLC, its mission is to revolutionize and appropriate the use of media into an operation of service by means of providing media outlets to inform, enthuse, and pilot marginalized youngsters between the ages of 11 and 17. Established as an innovative media company that transforms marginalized youngsters into pronounced young adults by providing opportunities that enable them to acquire, exercise, and inspire the world through their “voice,” I ultimately will S.H.A.P.E. lives through the use of media. With enhanced listening skills and my present involvement as a Site Leader for CCRE and as an MLK Scholar, I am certain that my goal is within reach, especially if I continue to put forward to concept of S.H.A.P.E.: Spirit, Heart, Adventure, Power and Existence.