

Elizabeth A. Howard #1 Project Executive Summary

Lauren Breaux, Tate Fancher, Blaklie Mitchell, Kyle Taylor, Lauren Terry

Day One Leadership Program, SLCE 1002

### **Project Executive Item 1: Realized Project Summary and Benefit**

This semester, the Freedom Riders came together with the Elizabeth A. Howard Therapeutic Riding and Activities Center. The Elizabeth A. Howard Riding Center serves people with a variety of physical and mental handicaps who benefit from therapeutic riding.

As we began our journey to completing the sensory trail for our CP, we had quite a few things that we aspired to accomplish for our project. Our first more obvious and broad goals were to complete the sensory trail and create a lasting impression at the Elizabeth A. Howard therapeutic riding center both in the physical things we would leave behind but as well as the relationships that we would be cultivating. Some things that we proposed to build and create for the sensory trail were animal cutouts, tennis ball wrap, lattice bridge, gravel along the trail, a pool noodle walk through, and wind chimes. On a weekly basis, we were striving to go every week consistently, always arrive on time or early, and create meaningful relationships with the people at the TRAC. As a group, we were hoping to grow closer to each other, learn how to work well together, develop patience, and meet deadlines that we were assigned in a timely manner.

To ensure we influenced the track positively by our action team, we had to collaborate as a team in order to accomplish the goals we had set for ourselves. One of our major accomplishments was the sensory trail itself. Upon the completion of our project, our action team had successfully cut out plywood animals, painted, and sealed them, made sensory boxes and birdhouses, strung together a tennis ball tree wrap, and hung colorful ribbons along the trail. All

of these items would add to the effectiveness of sense stimulation for the riders who would be participating in this fun, new trail.

Among our team and individual accomplishments, each member of the team noticed the development or improvement of things such as their relationship with their rider, completion of the required number of hours, accountability in arriving to their session, closer relationships with team members, and working as a team.

Although we accomplished many amazing things, there were certain aspects that we could not meet. Specific stations that we were hoping to place along the trail, including a pool noodle walk through, a gravel walk, and a lattice bridge, were not placed along the trail due to horse safety reasons, feasibility, or Day One guidelines. Proper communication between team members has room to improve along with the consistency in attending class or work sessions. No matter these unaccomplished items, our team successfully worked together in order to complete a project that will benefit an amazing population.

Our accomplishments are important because they benefit a large population of riders by leaving them with lasting changes on the trail that will assist them therapeutically. The sensory trail improves the therapy they are already receiving from the riding center. This accomplishment is extremely important to our CP because without the help from our action team and the Day One program they could not otherwise afford to build a sensory trail. Some of our other accomplishments teaches us to work with a population we are not used to working with thus doing this gets us out of our comfort zone and more prepared for the future.

In total, our team volunteered 128 hours at the TRAC, formed relationships with 5 riders, and drove 380 miles round trip during the ten weeks we served at the Elizabeth A. Howard Therapeutic Riding and Activity Center. An aspect our team wished to measure but could not

was their rider's true happiness. Even though this is not a quantifiable number, the team noticed an increase in the riders' radiant smiles and joy during the volunteer sessions.

## **Project Executive Item 2: Leadership Lessons Learned**

Some leadership lessons that we learned through our time in Day One are finding time in our busy schedules to get together to work on our project; driving long distance to get to where we need to be; learning to deal with time-consuming ideas; creating time to do weekly service; keeping good attendance at an 8:00AM class; communicating with one another; and committing to always attending class.

We overcame many obstacles over the course of completing our project. Obstacles such as what would we put on the sensory trail, when we would get together to build the materials, going every Thursday to the horse track, and losing a team member along the way. However, we were able to overcome these obstacles mainly due to two reasons. We have a great group dynamic and we excel at communicating with each other. We get along very well as a group so that makes it much easier for us to plan when to meet and get work done.

Throughout our time serving the people of the Elizabeth A. Howard Riding Center, we have learned multiple leadership lessons that we can incorporate into our everyday lives. We have learned that it is important to be punctual because as a leader people expect you to be reliable. We have also discovered that like most things in life, being a leader means making sacrifices and compromising. Each week, our members have to sacrifice two or more hours to help an amazing population, but we cannot be true leaders or make an impact on this world without giving a little or being willing to serve. It is important for leaders to take initiative and jump in and offer help whenever we see someone who is in need of assistance. We must do what needs to be completed and be able to pull our own weight, despite whether we like it or not.

Leaders must be open to change when things do not work out and always be ready to offer new ideas. The biggest lesson that our group has learned is that complaining gets you nowhere, and in fact only makes things worse. It is important to be able to communicate with different types of people and about different types of things in order to build a strong bond with people.

As an action team, we expected to learn many things such as how to grow as leaders, work together, work with people with disabilities, and work with horses. We learned how to grow as leaders through countless hours of lectures and class times, through hours of volunteering and workdays, and through talking to our fellow team members. We learned how to work together – we did this through compromise and communication. We learned how to work with people with disabilities, always use “people first” language and to have patience. We learned how to work with horses because they have feelings similar to humans and it is important to treat them with respect as well.

As an action team, we were surprised to learn many things. These things included lessons such as that the ability to take initiative is highly valued, early classes are not all that bad, and working as a team, sharing the load, and trusting others is a major key to success. We learned being present and being intentional about getting things done is the best way to complete these tasks. We learned that a team without communication is not much of a team at all and just because people with disabilities look as if they cannot accomplish much does not truly define them. The lesson we were most surprised to learn was that it is quite easy to develop a close, effective team with others whom you had never met before.

Team members can feasibly apply these lessons to their personal lives through many aspects. Employment upon graduating will highly depend on your ability to be punctual and consistent in attendance. Every job will also require you to be able to collaborate effectively with

others by being a team player, being cooperative and allowing for a “give-and-take” relationship to develop among fellow employees. As an adult, you must maintain the skill of acceptance, that things do not always go the way you intended them and that you must take the situation and go with it. Flexibility and proper communication skills are both key in developing a successful career. When facing difficult situations, you as an employee must be able to communicate properly with your employer in order to handle a positive or negative incident in the best way possible. Finally, employers wish to hire those who take initiative without hesitating or questioning. An employee who is willing to take the lead whenever necessary is much more likely to be hired or promoted than those who do not.