

# The Next Generation

- Grace Perry

As teenagers and high school students, we are the next generation. We continue to show leadership as we grow into better students, and hopefully better individuals. Yet, as high school students and teenagers, our leadership has limitations. We definitely can't just wake up one day and lead a devastating protest on history homework. We are confined to the fact that we are mere teenagers, not quite yet adults. Although, there are some of us who are pushing on those limitations and are breaking free of the apparent bounds of teenage leadership. Being "high school students" has not stopped Jamie Ehrlich and Emily Ricker, juniors at Marblehead High School (MHS), from using their leadership skills to not only get involved, but to also make a difference in and outside our community.

"Even if we are high school students I think it is still really important to be proactive in supporting a cause whatever it is, and it's really not in my nature to stay on the sidelines," Jamie said as we got deeper into our interview. Both Jamie and Emily have risen above the expectations set before them. As President and Founder of the newly formed Junior Statesmen of America club (JSA), she has begun to influence her friends and peers in early Tuesday morning meetings where students discuss political issues and topics both inside and outside of Marblehead. When discussing her club, Jamie confidently noted: "It's really important for young people to get active in the political climate that we are in. Inside JSA, we promote political awareness and involvement in the world around us."

Along with JSA, Jamie has participated in two major political campaigns that of Elizabeth Warren for U.S. Senator and her mother, Lori Ehrlich, for Massachusetts State Representative. When asked, "Who is the most influential leader in your life?" Jamie replied, "My mom. She stepped in as a new representative and worked very hard to get to where she is now, I really look up to her." When regarding the same question, Emily also replied without hesitation, "Similar to Jamie, my dad has definitely influenced the tendencies in me to get involved." She reminisced on one certain memory when her father brought her to their neighborhood council to debate issues such as deforestation.

Now, Emily has moved on to a broader political spectrum. Emily's leadership skills are present in several organizations such as the Massachusetts and North Eastern Regional Student Advisory Councils, where she participates as a delegate and member. She also gives back to her community in groups such as Student Government and our Marblehead School Committee. Emily has also found an interest in Jamie's very own JSA, "JSA has helped me so much; it has helped me get back to what I really love. It has helped me develop a big picture."

When asked what their major driving force behind their leadership is, Ehrlich recalled an event in which she was given the chance to work with her mother while the bullying bill was being drafted. On the day of the bill signing, Jamie answered an incoming phone call in her mother's office. The phone call was from a little boy who cried with joy as he expressed his compassion for the policies in the bullying bill and their overall support and devotion to the signing of the bill. The boy's openness towards Jamie inspired her and gave her the chance to see the good brought from her actions. "For me, at the end of the day, the driving force behind my leadership is how a lot of the stuff that I do changes people's lives." She later notes that her influence did not come from Marblehead High School; instead it came from inside her own upbringing. Jamie is also a new student at MHS, having just transferred from Pingree, a preparatory day school in Hamilton, Ma. "What has become of me is because I grew up sitting downstairs with my parents, watching the News, instead of going upstairs and watching Keeping Up With the Kardashians" Jamie said, "It's a common thing, really going out there and doing stuff that affects people. And of course it affects me."

When asked about Marblehead High School, both Emily and Jamie agreed that all students are given leadership opportunities whether in a club, sport or classroom. Jamie even mentioned, "I have more opportunities here than I did at Pingree." A sense of tradition inside Marblehead also contributes to leadership opportunities for young adults. For example, Emily noted, "Even those committee meetings that I would go to when I was about eight years old, I would just get this feeling like I was in my own government." Marblehead's sense of tradition and size proves to be perfect for a chance at leadership and quick influence.

Inside her leadership, Emily has found a love for compromise. She enjoys listening to people and solving problems that are favorable to all parties. Inside our interview, Emily was asked about the political climate of our modern world, she shared her opinion, "Everything is so crazy in today's political climate, it's as if no one can agree." And Emily is right. As the 2012 political campaigns come to a close, we look towards a new year with changes for the better.

Yet, as we meet these incoming years with a sense of fear and curiosity of what will come, I now can have a sense of hope. Our generation is filled with greatness. We can accomplish anything that we put our minds too. Already, as juniors in high school, students like Emily and Jamie are influencing and leading their fellow friends and peers. We are already making a difference and working today, for a better world tomorrow. In Jamie Ehrlich's words: "No matter who you support or where you come from, don't sit on the sidelines, find a way to get involved in your future."