

THE ALLUNTEERS CAMP REPORT

by Katleho Mokhele

After many a hurdle, The Allunteers Camp was successfully delivered from Monday, June 10th 2024 to Friday, June 14th 2024 at St. Stephen's Diocesan High School. It was a wonderful week filled with recreational learning, laughter and growth.

Our ultimate aim was to serve high school students by supporting them through the challenges they face as they prepare for life after high school. To achieve this, we designed a flexible program that included ice breakers, workshops, a panel discussion where college students came and shared their experiences since they finished high school, and fun games. Overall, the camp was well balanced in that we had serious conversations like a spectrum discussion on the necessity of education, a workshop about ikigai and personal vision planning, and a very emotional privilege walk activity, as well as light-hearted activities like Simon says, charades, a beading workshop, compliment circle and so on. We encouraged personal development through self awareness and team building. There was a civic engagement activity where the participants conducted research on a community challenge in groups and made presentations that received constructive criticism. All in all, every activity was designed to challenge their minds while exposing them to more of life than they have experienced before.

The impact of this camp exceeded my expectations. Most of the participants admitted that they had been going through life aimlessly because they felt they had no purpose. One of them even shared that she had had several suicide attempts because she felt under pressure to have her life figured out already. We have received feedback from them that they now have clearer vision and they are willing to try again. Best of all, they excitedly look forward to a reunion.

Personally, I experienced multiple paradigm shifts in the planning process and the execution of the camp. Firstly, I grew in my agility. The camp was meant to be about job shadowing but we faced so many challenges with finding willing hosts that we had to improvise and that is where the idea of workshops came about. We shifted the focus from job shadowing to peer mentoring. Interestingly, this is what the participants admittedly needed. Secondly, I learned that as a leader, my job is to guide and set the standard through leading by example but I have no control over the outcome. This camp has made me realise that mine is to impart knowledge that will hopefully transform the next person but I cannot force them to turn out a certain way as a result. It is a humbling and healthy revelation. I am walking away from this experience with a deeper understanding of youth challenges and a greater passion to develop more solutions for them.

In conclusion, recreation is a need, not a luxury. It is fundamental for a mentally healthy and well generation. Some parents and some societies place pressuring expectations on our budding youth without providing mentorship for these young people to reach those expectations. The volunteer facilitators of this camp walked in it with the goal of helping high school students and graduates have a clearer sense of direction in their academic and career journeys. And they walked out with an understanding that career disorientation in youth is way deeper than just choosing a career path. It is attached to one's sense of purpose and worth. It has been a privilege playing the role of peer mentors in the lives of the participants. As the facilitators of The Allunteers Camp 2024, we express our eternal gratitude to GoMakeADifference for empowering us to make a difference in our community. We love you and we honour you!