

Teen loves to volunteer, seeks career in medicine

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Rebecca Elkin, Vallivue High sophomore

NAMPA — Rebecca Elkin is dedicated to opening people's eyes to the dangers of methamphetamine — one of the causes that's drawn the attention of this 16-year-old who cares for others.

The Vallivue High School sophomore is one of about 120 Canyon County volunteers for the Idaho Meth Project, and she helps staff information booths at community events.

"When I first heard about the Idaho Meth Project, I was on a TRIO trip to the Boise career fair. I decided to sign up for volunteering. It was very important for me to join because I have seen many of my teen friends do meth and end up with nothing," Elkin told the Idaho Press-Tribune. "I want to prevent that from ever happening again. I also regret not doing anything for my friends who were caught up in it. I just let them go."

Who are your role models?

Abraham Lincoln, Tim Burton and Patch Adams (the real doctor, not Robin Williams, although he's cool, too!)

What is it about your role models that helps you be successful?

Abraham reminds me that even though someone looks different doesn't mean they are different. We should all treat people the way we want to be treated. Tim Burton is creative. He really makes me want to be creative, too! Patch Adams inspired me to be a doctor. I want to make people feel better, not just medically but emotionally, too. I want to change the idea of doctors. I want to help the people.

Why do you think you are a "kid you should know"? What makes you stand out in the crowd?

I like to give advice and help people. I also encourage people if they need help, like with math, to get it and not wait until it's too late. I, being a person who is terrible at math, passed algebra but didn't really get it. So I'm going to take some tutoring to fix that.

When people first meet you, what do you think their impression is?

Understandable. I always try to get across that I'm open-minded, that I understand when they don't want to talk or just want to vent. Or if they don't want to be my friend, that it's OK. I don't like to crowd.

Once they get to know you, does that impression change?

I hope it doesn't. That is a goal of mine: to instill people with confidence and trust of my understanding their situations, good or bad.

How would your friends describe you?

I don't know how they would describe me. But I hope it's positive words, something along the lines of trustworthy or strong-willed.

Have you always been the way you are today?

No, I used to be mean, talk down to people younger than I was ... That all changed when I started high school. I straightened myself out. I knew that if I didn't grow up I wouldn't get anywhere.

Have you had any challenges to overcome?

Yes, I lost a lot of self-respect. So I'm slowly gaining back my self-confidence. That's where people come in. When I help them I know I'm doing something good or helpful for them and that helps me. I'm not very book smart, either. I'm more of a visual person, so if you give me a history book, I daydream of Indians and such things. So I don't really get work done and it's hard to remember. But I'm teaching myself study skills with help of my math and history teacher.

What advice would you give to kids your age about achieving goals?

Don't give up. Nothing is holding you back but your own doubts.

What advice have you been given that really made a difference?

Money doesn't control your life, and your future is in your hands.

What do you like to do in your free time when you are not in school?

I work on cars, volunteer and read a lot.