

Showing Up
Mt. Baker Leadership Campfire Closing 2007
By John Bieker, ASB Adviser, Battle Ground High

Star light, star bright
First star I see tonight
I wish I may,
I wish I might,
Have the wish I wish tonight.

The first stars we can see each night are the ones that shine the brightest as the sky gets darker. They might be planets, the largest stars, or the stars that are situated closest to the earth. As the seasons roll by and the earth changes positions in its orbit, some of the stars will appear to vary in intensity, but when we look up at the sky, certain stars will always stand out for their brightness and their beauty. They are so striking that who knows how many children have made a wish on that first bright star they saw in the sky.

But what would the night sky look like if the only stars to be seen were the brightest stars? There would be no constellations. There would be no milky way. Even the North Star, the reference point that navigators have used for thousands of years, is not the brightest star in the galaxy. No. The celestial sky is beautiful not because it has a handful of bright stars that shine in their due season, but because it has millions upon millions of glimmering stars that show up every night.

In the last few days, you have seen some of the brightest stars at Mt. Baker. The talents of delegates like Miles absolutely amaze me. SC John Bittinger showed us the wonders of science and the majesty of the heavens. JCs Alyssa and Lexi touched our hearts, and SC Leslie showed us the greatest act of courage I have ever seen in my life. These people have been our planets, our moons, our meteors that filled us with wonder as they streaked across the sky.

But there are almost 300 people here, and we can't all be the brightest stars. For some of us, it is not our calling to outshine everything around us. However, just because we don't shine the brightest, it doesn't mean we can't be seen and it certainly doesn't mean that we don't belong in the heavens. We can all be glimmering stars.

I have been coming to Mt. Baker for five years now. In that time, I have seen some incredible people doing incredible things. The JCs, the SCs and the delegates bring abilities and experiences up in front of the group that dazzle those that look upon them. I saw those stars and I wished I could do that. I wished I could take an unbeatable obstacle from my own life and share with Mt. Baker how I beat the odds and came out a better, stronger person because of it. I wanted to finish my speech and have 300 people in the auditorium cheer with tears rolling down their cheeks. I wanted to shine.

Well, here I am.

The trouble is that I don't have any stories like that to tell. I am very lucky in that my life has been relatively free from traumatic experiences. I haven't ever been forced to draw on strength I didn't know was there to rise above a challenge. In fact, the greatest tragedies in my life are not things that have happened to me, but things that haven't happened to me because I was too content and too lazy to take up a challenge.

All through high school and college, I took the easy way out of everything. I participated in ASB when it was convenient for me, but was nowhere to be found when there was real work to be done. In high school, I got grades that were good enough to get by and in college I took classes that didn't challenge me. I was well on my way to not shining *at all*.

But then a funny thing happened.

Now, usually, this is where you would expect to hear about some cataclysmic event that forever altered the way I look at life. But there wasn't one. I just looked up one day and found myself teaching high school history classes. Somewhere along the line, the kids asked me to chaperone a dance. I said I would, and when the dance rolled around, I showed up.

I showed up.

That was it. That was the beginning. Nothing memorable happened at that dance, but because I showed up I was asked to chaperone other dances. As I continued to show up at event after event, more people saw me and more opportunities presented themselves. I helped coach the soccer team, then the tennis team. I made deeper connections with staff and students than I had ever thought possible. And the more I worked with students and staff members, the more I cared about my school and the people that surrounded me (remember: people support what they help to create).

Near the end of my first year of teaching, I asked my athletic director if there were any ways for me to be more involved with the leadership program.

At the time, I probably couldn't have told you what made me want to do that. I had never sought out extra responsibilities before, what made me want to suddenly start? I can tell you now that it is because I had started to care. I began to feel an attachment to something that was larger than myself that had never been there before. I wanted to be involved. Maybe I didn't have a lot to offer in terms of knowledge or experience, but at least I could be there to help. I could show up.

Not long after I asked my A.D. about getting involved with the ASB program, he contacted me to let me know that the previous advisor had resigned and that the job was mine if I wanted it. Even though I didn't know the first thing about what that job would entail, I accepted. And when I was told that my training to teach the class would be to go and serve as an intern senior counselor at Mt. Baker leadership camp, even though I didn't know what to expect, I showed up.

And I have been showing up ever since. At dances and events during the school year and at leadership camp for a week every summer. As it turns out, I don't need to be the brightest star. 99% of the time, just showing up is more than enough, and that other 1% of the time, the brightest stars are never very far away. Every time I come here I see more clearly that just as the little glimmering stars are the key to the beauty of the night sky, it isn't only the handful of the brightest stars at Mt. Baker that make this a great experience. Every year I have my chance to rise in the sky with that handful of the brightest stars and glimmer (however faintly) alongside them.

Mt. Baker 2007 is almost done. Together, we've seen what the sky over Cispus looks like, but I wonder what the sky over your home school looks like. Maybe you already know where the bright stars are. In fact, whether you think so or not, others probably see you as the bright stars. But I wonder how many of the glimmering stars can you find. I wonder if you draw them out. I wonder if you can give them a chance to shine? I wonder if they can be the brightest stars in the sky when their season rolls around.

I want you to think about something the next time you get the chance to watch the sun set and see the stars come out, I want you to remember that it takes *all* of those stars to make the sky beautiful. And by the same token, this camp, your schools, and this world are a brighter and more beautiful place because you showed up.

Discussion Questions:

About You

- When and why did you become involved in student leadership?
- Who has helped you become the best person you can be? How?
- What talents and skills do you bring to your student leadership team?
- The author states: "Every year I have my chance to rise in the sky with that handful of the brightest stars and glimmer (however faintly) alongside them." Who do surround yourself with? Are they helping you to shine or diminishing you?

About Your School Community

- Who are the "bright stars" at your school? What gifts and talents do they have?
- Who needs a chance to shine at your school? Why? How can you make this happen?
- How do the people in your student leadership team blend their talents together to create something bigger than any one person? Describe what you create?
- Describe what gift each member of the group brings to the leadership team?

About the Author's Message

- What does the author mean by the idea that "99% of the time just showing up is more than enough"?
- What does the author mean by "it takes *all* of those stars to make the sky beautiful"?
- The author states: "I began to feel an attachment to something that was larger than myself that had never been there before." What is something "larger than yourself" that you feel attached to? (i.e. a group, an idea, a value, a person, a cause, a goal, etc.)
- What specific part of the writing, phrase or metaphor had an impact on you? Why?

