

Dear future Beyond Borders student,

Let me start with this...Comfort zones are meant to be stepped out of, opportunities are meant to be grasped, real life experiences are meant to prepare you for the future, confidence is meant to be built on, leadership skills are meant to keep developing.

Before Beyond Borders I was someone who liked to feel safe. I did not step out of my comfort zone and I did not grasp new opportunities; I was someone who liked having a set routine every day that did not change. I was someone who needed to be pushed out of my comfort zone and pushed to grasp opportunities. I was actually pushed into doing Beyond Borders. But now looking back at the semester I am so thankful that I was pushed to do this program. At the end of the semester I am now someone who is willing to try anything new. I don't look at opportunities as threats anymore, I look at them as experiences that I will cherish for a lifetime. I look at stepping out of a comfort zone as an ability to grow, to develop my skills, to become a stronger individual. Beyond Borders allowed me to experience many real life situations that helped me feel more prepared for my future.

The final fundraising event is a good example of getting me prepared for the future. I was put into a real life work situation and I had to figure out how to work with others in an organized manner and how to be the most successful as a group. This event not only prepared me for the future but it also helped me to decide what I want my job to be when I am older.

My confidence levels have improved immensely. I went from being the shy girl who was nervous speaking in front of crowds to being the girl who is the one to take the lead, participate and voice her opinions. I learned how to be confident in my leadership abilities and I learned how to lead by example. I learned to be humble, grateful and determined and I believe these are the 3 traits a great leader must possess.

Not only did I grow as a person I also made friendships that will last a lifetime. From Tawingo all the way to the final event, I have gained 45 new friendships; strong friendships, everlasting friendships. I consider these people my family and I now have 45 people that I feel comfortable going to and asking for help. I've grown as a person, I gained friendships but I also gained new role models. The teachers at Beyond Borders are incredible!!!! They are people that are so supportive and proud of you and just want you to succeed in every way that you can. Their support made me more confident; their support made me ready for the future, their support helped me grow to be a better leader.

This program is an opportunity of a lifetime, one that will be always be remembered. Step out of your comfort zone, build your confidence, develop your leadership skills, get prepared for the future and always keep your doors open for new opportunities. This program is one that I can guarantee you will not regret taking.

All the best,

Mary Rodenburg (Beyond Borders '16)