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Leadership is one of the key foundations to success. Everyday leaders are not only off pursuing their own dreams and creating their own goals, but they are inspiring and pushing others to do the same. I was one of the students that was fortunate enough to take part in the first ever ALA program at Miller High School. I was a senior, it was my last year of high school and everything was so overwhelming with what was going to happen next in my life. I made many decisions and changed them a million times, but one thing remained the same. My goal was to be a wildlife officer.

I went to Hocking College for two years in the Natural Resources Law Enforcement program and in May of 2015 I received my Associates of Applied Science. During the summer of 2014 I had to complete an internship as part of my degree requirements. I had no idea what to do or where to go. Until, I remembered a high school teacher telling me about a family member that worked in South Dakota as a Conservation Officer. I did some research and applied to every internship opportunity in South Dakota. Sure enough I was hired as a fisheries intern in the northeast portion of the state. I was 19 years old and leaving home, over 1000 miles away. Was it Scary? Of course it was, but I knew it had to be done. I got to South Dakota and absolutely fell in love with the state and the people.

Now, fast forward to the summer after. I had just graduated and not only was I back working for a habitat crew in a different part of the state, but two boys I went to college with actually went to South Dakota to work as well! Upon graduation I had no idea what to do after the completion of my second internship. I didn't know whether to apply for jobs in South Dakota or Ohio, I was torn between the two. I made a choice, I wanted to be out west. I made so many great contacts and experienced so much in South Dakota, I knew that's where I wanted to be.

Today I am working as a seasonal fisheries tech in central South Dakota. I love the people I get to surround myself with here on a daily basis. They have pushed me to be a better person and gave me the confidence I needed to achieve my goals and dreams. I am in the hiring process right now to be a Conservation Officer in South Dakota, I was one of the four candidates that received a conditional offer. Upon completion of some stipulations and requirements, I will be well on my way to my dream job! I only have a few weeks left of the hiring process and if all goes well (which I am sure it will), I will be in the academy, one step closer to my dream.

I have had a lot of great people come into my life the last few years and inspire me to be my best, push myself, and push others. ALA was one of the best opportunities I had in high school. I was already a leader, but with ALA I learned how to be a better leader and a better person in general. I took away two big things from the ALA program; failure leads to success and integrity is your best friend. We are going to fail in life, we're only human. But that does not mean you can't bounce back up and chase after your dreams. If you fail, take something from it and make it a lesson learned. Do it better next time. Push yourself, and strive to achieve your dreams.

Integrity is your best friend, and once you learn to accept that, you won't fold under pressure or let other people make bad influences on your decisions. Do what you know is right, even when no one is around to see. Be the person that makes a difference by doing what is right and making the best choice. Be a leader and prove to people that they can do something great with themselves and in the society.

ALA inspired me and pushed me to do great things. I am strong, I am brave, and I am a leader. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for not only myself but for the ALA program as well. I know that many great leaders and successful people will come from the program, and just like I did, they will strive to be better and strive to achieve their dreams. ALA was part of the foundation that helped build me into the person I am today. It's a building block that will help leaders become great and successful. Leaders are born, but with a little guidance, encouragement, and knowledge those leaders will do fascinating things. Learn to accept life, and accept failure. Always do the right thing and don't change the person you are just because of the group you are around. If you make a mistake, admit it. If you fail, live with it and move on. Set a goal, achieve it, and live your dreams.

Samantha Williams