

listen

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

NOVEMBER 2007

MICHAEL SESSIONS - Teen Mayor

MICHAEL SESSIONS
MAYOR

Choosing Your Future • Coping With Deployment • Reach Your Dreams

Contents



"Officer" Ryan Takes a Stand 4

She was going to drink and drive. I had to do *something*.

Pressure Points 6

Liquid Ecstasy, G, Georgia Home Boy, Jungle Juice—the names for this trip are as endless as the side effects.

Michael Sessions: Teen Mayor 8

The write-in candidate for Mayor of Hillsdale wins the election. Now what's on the agenda for this ambitious teen?

Operation Coping With Deployment 12

Know someone serving away from home? We'll tell you how to cope with their deployment. Don't know anyone? Consider adopting a soldier. Anyone can help support the troops.

Bend or Break Quiz 15

When change is in the wind do you bend or break? Check out our quiz to find out.

Eban and Ani-Mai 16

School is locked down. Is it just a drill or a real emergency?

Choosing Your Future 18

Can you guess what issue is so important that the federal government poured more than \$150 million into it last year? I think you'll be surprised.

Reach Your Dreams 20

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had a dream. Do you? We'll tell you how to find and reach your dreams.

Features

Matt Morton: Empowering Others 22

This teen used his challenging background as motivation to help other kids. You can too. Find out how.

Playing Politics 24

You've heard of fantasy football. You've heard of fantasy baseball. But have you heard of fantasy Congress?

Song in My Heart 28

I loved to sing, but try out for chorus? No way. I was too shy. Wasn't I?

Departments

Editorial: There Goes the Neighborhood 3

In which one of my favorite hiking spots is threatened by drug dealers.

Good For You 10

Color. It's not just for the artist anymore. There is a very good reason why we enjoy colorful food.

I'm Listening 14

"My friend Hannah introduced me to her friend Megan. Now if Hannah finds out we got together without her she gets really jealous and upset. Any advice?"

What's Up With That? 27

"My friend's brother, who is in the Army, just came home from Iraq. He wasn't injured, but he seems really jumpy and depressed and drinks a lot more than he used to. Is this normal?"

Spotlight 30

Marc Triller tells us what it's like to be part of the Senate Page Program.

Cool Stuff With Kent and Kyle 31

Is there any better way to learn other than through the School of Hard Knocks? There sure is and it's enrolling right now. Check it out.

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Max and I discovered a trail system right in our own backyard. On the outskirts of the small city where I live the Parks Department put a great set of trails. You'd never know you were so close to the city unless you climb the trail called Tim's Vista. You can sit on the park bench someone lugged all the way up there and admire a view of the city.

Not long after we stopped snowshoeing on the golf course and started hiking the trails we turned up one day and found the gates locked. A group of women and dogs were just leaving so I asked them why the gates were locked and if we could still hike the trails. They told me that they thought the gates had been closed because drug dealers had been driving to the back of the parking lot and dealing drugs. They said the police had been patrolling regularly and had the place locked down, but that we could still use the trails.

There Goes the Neighborhood

I was a little nervous. What if there were drug dealers hanging around? They're not exactly known for their easy-going, carefree attitudes. Max and I headed for the trailhead determined not to be scared off by lurking drug dealers, but a little resentful that we had to be scared on public trails. Not 100 yards in we met a man just hanging out drinking a soda. He'd taken off his backpack and mittens and was just standing there.

Was he a drug dealer? He sure didn't look like a regular hiker. He looked like somebody waiting around to make a drug deal. Who knows. I don't and I'm sure I never will. I was just glad I was out hiking with a big, protective dog like Max.

We talk a lot in *Listen* about how dangerous drugs are to our bodies, but we don't talk a lot about how dangerous they make the world at large, my hiking spot, or your neighborhood or school. Drugs ruin things: neighborhoods, people's lives, towns, cities, even homes. But we don't have to let them. We can do our part today to keep drugs from ruining anything else. We can speak out against drugs and keep them as far away from us as possible.

Until next time, have fun, be cool, and make good choices,



Céleste Perrino-Walker
Editor

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“OFFICER” RYAN

By Marjorie Dempster

THAT TUESDAY NIGHT I WAS AT THE SHORT STOP. TO START WITH I BOUGHT MYSELF A POP AND WAS MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS, UNTIL I NOTICED A LADY IN HER PARKED CAR—SHE WAS **DRINKING A BEER** AND WAS IN THE **DRIVER’S SEAT!**

That set the alarm bells ringing in my head, right there. I come from a large family and every one of us 10 kids is special to my mom and dad. To top it off, we were all still reeling from the dreadful car accident that happened that summer. After drinking all night, a drunk driver had pulled out from a bar and smashed headlong into a vehicle belonging to a man my dad works with. The man’s two little kids were killed instantly. Hospitalized himself for a while, it now looked like he was going to be OK—but he will never really be OK after that, if you know what I mean.

And there I was on the verge of a possible repeat of that incident. What could I do? I mean, I’m only a kid. I could just forget about it and hope that all would be well. But then again, I thought what if this very driver happens to hit one of my own family, or one of my friends or friends’ families, or any-

one at all for that matter.

Enough is enough! There has been enough senseless dying. I realized I couldn’t not do something. Next thing I knew, I was standing at her window.



“You’re drinking, so you don’t need to drive,” I heard myself say.

Her mouth dropped open and she just stared. Coming out of the store, another lady approached holding a pack of beer and started to get into the car on the passenger side.

“What’s going on here?” she asked.

“This guy doesn’t think I should drive because I’ve been drinking,” the woman in the car told her flatly.

“Well, I’ll drive then,” the newcomer asserted, her long brown hair waving in the breeze.

“Have you been drinking?” I asked. By the way she talked, I could tell she had.

“Only a beer,” she answered with a wink and smile. “Then you

don’t need to drive either.” Turning back to the woman in the driver’s seat, I held out my cell phone. “Here’s my cell phone. Call someone to come get you.” My voice was firm and authoritative. In fact, the longer we talked the surer I was that I was doing the right thing.

At that point it occurred to me the picture I made—a skinny teenager wearing sunglasses and a black T-shirt with the words “Police Academy” on it. (I had gotten the shirt from my brother who had attended the academy the past fall.) I don’t know if it was my attire or what, but she took my phone from my hand and placed a call.

With a voice that was almost a whisper she asked someone if they could come pick her up. Within a few minutes a car did arrive and the women got inside and left.

It’s funny how good I felt after that. For that matter, I know I would have felt awful had I not said a thing and some tragedy resulted. It didn’t even bother me that someone may have overheard. I had done what was right. I may have saved a life! I had taken a stand.

TAKES A STAND





SCHOOLWORK FRIENDS SOCIAL PRESSURE DATING FITTING IN PRESSURE POINTS

By Vannetta Chapman

PRESSURE. You know the feeling—there's no doubt your head is going to explode, someone's screaming at you, and you just **shut down**. You'd give anything to be somewhere else.

What if I told you for just five dollars you could feel good all over and forget all your problems? OK, so you might end up unconscious, on a respirator, raped, or even dead, but everything has risks. You'd think I was crazy wouldn't you? You'd be right. But some teens think gamma hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) is the escape route from pressure. Liquid Ecstasy, G, Georgia Home Boy, Jungle Juice—the names for this trip are as endless as the side effects.

Teens I talked to admitted they are basically against drugs; however, 31 percent confessed they have tried them at one time or another because, they said, life's hard, and sometimes it's not so easy figuring out what to do. Sometimes the pressure gets to be too much. One high school senior explained, "Many teens don't know what's going on with their life. They get so confused, and plus, parents add pressure. School problems always become an excuse to take drugs, plus wanting to be cool. I think teenagers just want to forget about their problems."

GHB, the official name for Liquid Ecstasy will make you forget all right. Within 30 minutes of ingesting you will experience drowsiness, forgetfulness, loss of muscle tone, decreased heartbeat and breathing—which is why it's the perfect date rape drug. This is often followed by a coma-like state which lasts 1-2 hours.

So why do teens use it? There's no odor, so GHB is harder for parents to

detect. But it does show up in urine tests for up to 12 hours, and the number of overdoses are steadily increasing as its popularity in dance clubs, raves, and trances increases. It's especially dangerous when mixed with alcohol.

Teens are smart, and 96 percent of those I surveyed knew that mixing alcohol with Liquid X would be a bad thing. In fact that practice is increasing GHB deaths, causing it to kill more users than Ecstasy.

There's only a small difference between just enough GHB and an overdose, but that small amount can cause you to stop breathing, which is why it's important to watch your friend's back. If you suspect someone you know has been using or has been slipped the drug without their knowledge, if you have trouble waking them up or feeling a pulse, get medical help immediately. Don't wait around to see if they're OK—waiting around could mean you're signing their book at the local funeral home. It's gruesome, I know, but so are the facts.

Those same teens who said it was crazy to use GHB feel confused about what exactly constitutes drug use. Being addicted to drugs is one thing, but using occasionally is another—at least according to the teens I spoke with. Experimenting with drugs is drug use. Whatever you call it, however often you do it, the effects can be lethal.

Even with all the school and community programs to "Just say no," peer pressure was a major rea-



son given for trying illegal substances. If everyone else is doing it, it just feels strange to say no. Plus, we all want to fit in. Then there are all those problems coming from so many different directions.

Before you know it, saying yes gets easier and saying yes more often doesn't seem like such a bad thing.

Once they take the drug for the first time, they get addicted to it because they feel better. So they start taking it more often. There is a euphoric effect to GHB.

There's also a progressive decreased susceptibility to the drug's effects. The longer you take it, the more you need.

Not a good thing. While you were zoning, those problems didn't go away. They're still waiting for you.

"The main reason most teens use drugs is because they can't handle the pressure of friends or life in general," one teen said. High school students know about that sort of pressure. "They like to know they have a way to escape reality, whether it's through alcohol, physical pain, or drugs. Anyone can be a victim of the pressure of life. You just have to be strong and remember the consequences and wonder if it's really worth a few minutes of bliss."

Don't lie to yourself. Those moments of bliss can carry a high cost.

Or you could start being there for each other. There's a thought. We could actually talk to each other. Work out some of the problems. Be a friend. You don't have to buy friendship in a bottle, look up the formula on the Internet, or carefully measure the dosage. Just be a friend. Works pretty well. It always has.

For more information on GHB,
go to www.dea.gov/concern/ghb_factsheet.html.

For information on how to avoid date rape drugs, go to
www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/drug_info_ghb_rohyphol.asp.

"I just love
representing the people."

By Elisabeth Deffner

Teen Mayor MICHAEL SESSIONS

November 8, 2005, was a landmark day for Michael Sessions. At lunch he left his high school campus to go to the Hillsdale Community Library and cast his ballot in his first election. Then he returned to school.

"It was like any other day," says Michael, now 19. "I went home—and I was a nervous wreck."

Who can blame him? He still had hours to wait until he heard the results of the election—an election in which he was running for mayor of his Michigan hometown.

Throwing His Hat in the Ring

Not every teenager would think about running for mayor. But Michael



All photos of Michael Sessions provided by Pete Mowry/Hillsdale Daily News



It was hard to convince some people he wasn't just playing a joke.

says he can't remember a time he wasn't interested in government and politics. "My dad always comes to dinner ranting or raving about what's going on in the political world," he explains.

And Michael was very aware of the challenges Hillsdale faces, especially ensuring that there are enough jobs to go around. His father lost his job in 2003, and Michael remembers his dad's search to find a new one.

Even before he turned 18—the minimum age for a political candidate in Hillsdale—Michael started talking about running for office. In fact, he ran for Student Council vice president his junior year of high school. (He lost!)

The petition to place his name on the Hillsdale ballot was due in May 2005. Unfortunately, Michael didn't turn 18 until September! He had to wait four months until he was legally old enough.

On his birthday he went to the city clerk's office and declared himself a write-in candidate for mayor of Hillsdale. "It was a spur-of-the-moment decision to go down there," he admits. He was running against current mayor Doug Ingles.

There were less than two months until the election. Michael started campaigning immediately. He spent \$700 of his earnings from a summer job to buy signs that announced his candidacy. He walked around town and knocked on doors, introducing himself to the citizens of Hillsdale and explaining his stance on various issues facing the town. He did such a good job that he won the Hillsdale Fire Department's support—a fact that was announced in the local paper just days before the election.

"That really catapulted the election," he says. "For a write-in candidate, that's pretty big."



Is This a Joke?

It was hard to convince some people he wasn't just playing a joke, he recalls. "They sat there with a confused look on their face—'Young man, how old are you?'" he says. "[But] I made people feel comfortable, able to fill out their ballots for me."

Continued on page 11

Good for

**Color
Yourself
Healthy**



Humans love color, including in the foods we eat. Can you imagine sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner only to discover all the food is the same color? Brown turkey. Brown rice. Brown gravy. Brown bread. Doesn't sound very appetizing, does it?

Well, it turns out there is a good reason we enjoy colorful foods. Recent research has shown they are actually healthier for us and may even help us live longer. CHECK OUT THESE COLORFUL FACTS:

When we are exposed to ultraviolet light, breathe in smog, or even when we eat, our body produces free radicals—molecular fragments that cause nasty things like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and even wrinkled skin.

Brightly colored foods, like fruits and vegetables, get their color from pigments called flavonoids. These pigments turn out to be powerful antioxidants, natural disease fighters that act like Special Forces soldiers in your body, combating the effects of free radicals.

The brighter and deeper the color, the more flavonoids are present and the more powerful the antioxidant effect. So, dark greens, like spinach and kale, are better for you than pale iceberg lettuce, and deep orange sweet potatoes are better than white potatoes.

Yellow or orange fruits and vegetables, like pumpkins, squash, apricots, and peaches, are packed with beta-carotene and lutein, flavonoids which may protect your eyes and skin from sun damage.

The pink in grapefruit and the red in tomatoes comes from lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that can help prevent cancer, reduce your risk of heart disease, and protect your eyes.

Red peppers have more vitamin C and beta-carotene than green ones.



Dark blue and purple vegetables and fruits, like purple cabbage, eggplant, grapes, and blueberries, are especially good at fighting cancer.

Eating lots of dark green, leafy vegetables, like lettuce and spinach, can significantly decrease your risk of getting heart disease.

A diet rich in blueberries may improve your memory and brain function.



Carrots and other bright orange vegetables can help lower cholesterol and prevent heart disease and stroke.

Avocados help the body absorb lutein and beta-carotene. So add some sliced avocado to your next salad.

It's best to get your flavonoids naturally, from fruits and vegetables, rather than in a pill. In fact, taking large doses of these substances in pill form can actually cause harm.

To get the best effect, eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables every day. Flavonoids seem to work better when taken together. So a fruit salad is probably better than just eating one fruit by itself.



We can all use a little more color in our lives and, it turns out, even in our diets. So color yourself healthy. When you sit down for your Thanksgiving feast this year, pretend you're an artist. Have some fun and see how colorful you can make your plate by mixing and matching what you put on it. You'll be thankful you did!



By Richard G. Edison,
PA-C (Physician Assistant-
Nationally Certified)



He sure did. Michael ended up winning the election, 670 votes to his opponent's 668.

It was Michael's first election as a voter, too! Of course he voted for himself. But he couldn't count on his friends' ballots—only two of his fellow students at Hillsdale High School were old enough to vote in the election!

What about his parents?

"Hopefully my parents did [vote for me] too," says Michael with a chuckle. "I didn't ask them! That's their right."

Taking on mayoral responsibilities wasn't easy. Because he was only 18, Michael was big news. He spent the first several days after the election being interviewed by newspaper and radio reporters and making guest appearances on national talk shows. "We live on a little dirt road," he says. "I remember a satellite truck trying to get itself up here for NBC *Nightly News*. It was getting all caught up in the trees."

"The first city council meeting was quite chaotic," he adds. More than 200 people attended, and there were news cameras everywhere.

Michael has been in office for more than a year now, and the hub-bub has quieted. But attendance at city council meetings is still high. "People want to come, want to voice their opinion," he says. "I encourage that. I want it to be our form of city government: anybody who wants to show up and voice their opinion."

Tough Issues

The big issues Hillsdale is facing are still the issues Michael focused on during his campaign. He is still fighting so the town can hire a fourth firefighter, and he's still brainstorming ways to bring new jobs to the community. He has new ideas that he hopes the city council and city staff

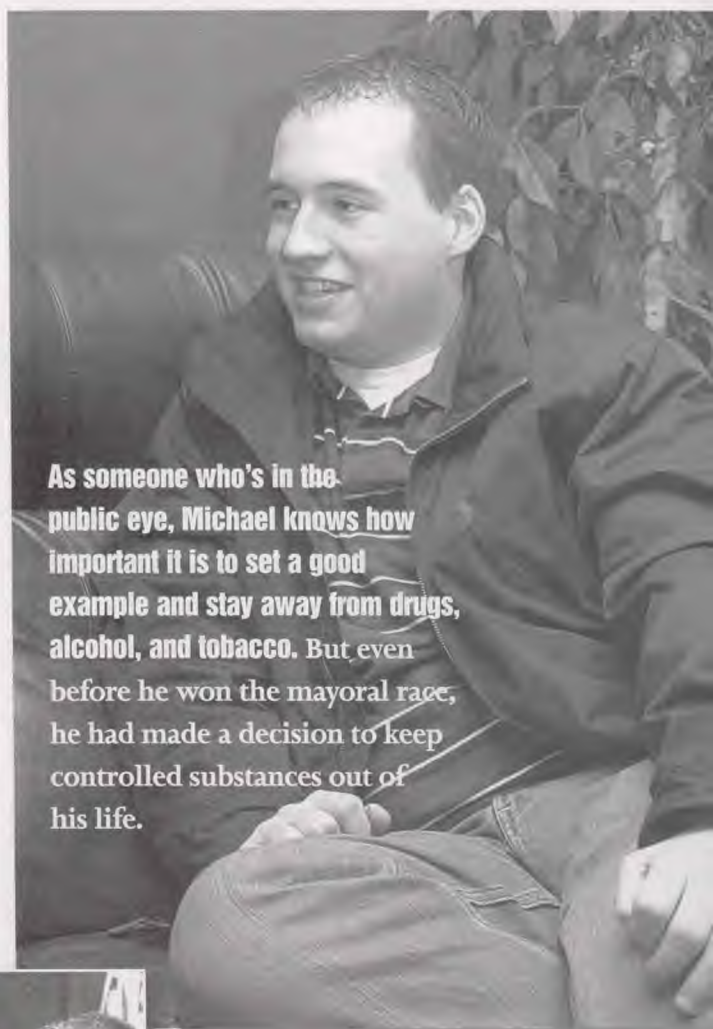
will be open to, but he's also learning to be patient. "Government doesn't work at the snap of a finger," he explains. "It goes at a snail's pace."

"Sometimes I have to do my own thing at a council meeting. I'm not afraid of sticking up for what I think."

That includes the TEAM program, which combines lessons about the dangers of substance abuse with personal safety tips and information about the legal consequences of negative activities like truancy or joining a gang. "We thought that was a little bit more practical than a program focusing exclusively on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco," explains Michael, who says that

substance abuse isn't a huge problem in Hillsdale particularly—"it's a major problem anywhere."

As someone who's in the public eye, Michael knows how important it is to set a good example and stay away from drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. But even before he won the mayoral race, he had made a decision to keep controlled substances out of his life. "You have to make a pledge with yourself that you're going to stay off



As someone who's in the public eye, Michael knows how important it is to set a good example and stay away from drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. But even before he won the mayoral race, he had made a decision to keep controlled substances out of his life.



that," he says.

"I make sure I watch over the environment I'm in. I'm a strong person, so if I'm being pressured on alcohol abuse or narcotics or anything along those lines, I basically remove myself from the situation. That's what you have to do."

A freshman at Hillsdale College, Michael hasn't chosen a major yet because he isn't sure what he wants to do when he graduates. He hasn't decided whether to run for reelection, either. But for now, he's doing exactly what he wants.

"I just love representing the people here. I love going into a situation and hearing everybody's concerns, seeing what we can do for them," he says.

"That's the best. It's a blast for me."

By Jessica Burkhart

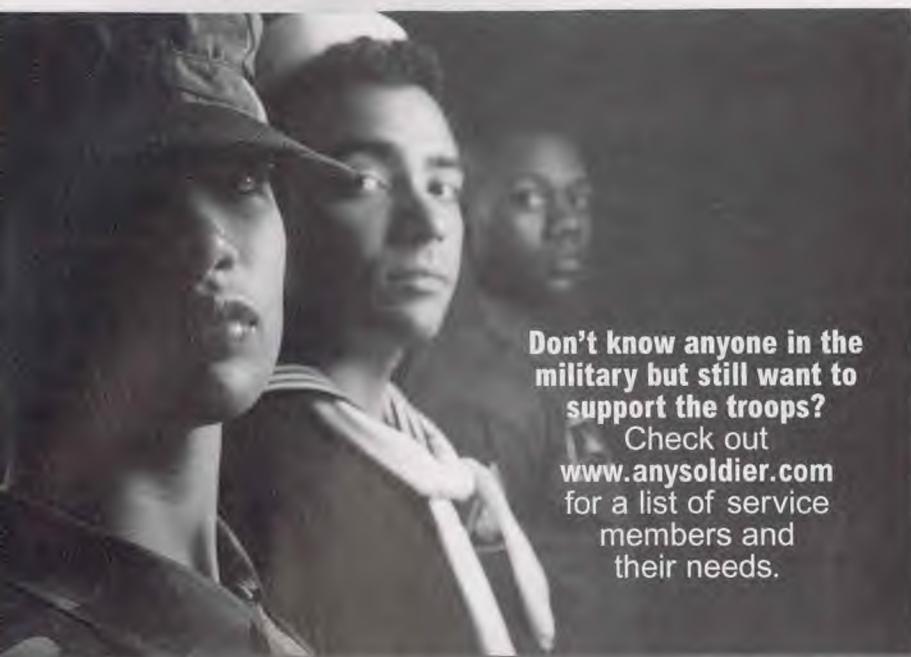
Dealing with the absence of a friend or family member in the military can be a painful and stressful situation. While you may feel better keeping your feelings to yourself, there are many benefits in sharing your concerns with friends, family members, or counselors. "Talk about the practical aspects of what will change in the family routine and what will stay the same," says Annie Fox, author of *Too Stressed to Think? A Teen Guide to Staying Sane When Life Makes You CRAZY*. "Talk about specific ways the family will continue being a family with strength and mutual support."

Stephanie, from Texas, has a friend currently serving in Iraq and a boyfriend who is likely to be deployed within a year. "To keep from constantly worrying, I write e-mails," Stephanie says. "If possible, I send letters, too, because it's always comforting to see their actual handwriting." Stephanie realizes that she is most likely more emotional about the situation than her friend who is serving in Iraq. "I imagine that it's taxing on



OPERATION COPING WITH DEPLOYMENT

Getting your emotions out can
help you feel less anxious.



Don't know anyone in the military but still want to support the troops?

Check out www.anysoldier.com for a list of service members and their needs.

soldiers' emotions to know that someone close to them is worrying, because you never want someone close to you to experience that emotion," says Stephanie. "I keep that in mind when I start to feel worrisome." Stephanie is one of the millions of children and teens coping with a loved one in the military.

If someone you care about has been deployed, you're likely to experience a range of emotions. That's completely normal, but if the symptoms persist for more than a couple of weeks, you may need to seek counseling. If you or someone you know is dealing with deployment and is currently experiencing mood swings, depression, chronic anxiety, or sleeplessness, you or your friend may be having difficulty coping with this stressful period. Here are five tips to help you cope:

★ Remember that the emotions you feel are normal. There is no reason to feel ashamed of being sad or scared. You may feel overwhelmed until you've had time to adjust to the situation. The adjustment period differs for everyone, so don't feel guilty if you don't adjust as fast as some-

one else. You will feel better with time.

★ Know that you're not alone. Talk to others about your situation. Many schools have counselors prepared to help students cope with deployment. Confide in a friend or whisper your anxieties to a pet. Getting your emotions out can help you feel less anxious and better able to tackle your worries.

★ Get back to a normal routine. When someone you know has been deployed, try not to avoid your normal activities. Ease yourself back into clubs, sports, and time with friends. Normalcy will help you feel calmer and will help the time pass.

★ Hope for the future instead of worrying about the present. Anxiety won't help you or your loved one who has been deployed. Instead, plan a celebration for your friend or family member when he or she returns. You'll fill your time and you'll be doing something for the person you care about.

★ Write or e-mail the service member. Tell him or her how much you care and offer them support and gratitude for serving in the military. Enclose pictures or cards to brighten their day. Take videos of important events and share them with the service member when they come home.

Aside from those tips, experts recommend staying away from too much news coverage. Pictures and videos from conflict areas will only serve to make you more nervous. "I like getting my news from people who are actually in the military," says Stephanie. She makes an effort not to watch the news 24/7 and be caught up in media coverage.

If these tips aren't enough, and professional support appeals to you, there are probably several licensed therapists in your area. "Don't overlook the very real need to talk to someone," says Fox. "The entire family may benefit from a session." If group therapy doesn't feel right, private sessions are also available at many clinics. Therapy should be a safe, open, confidential outlet for you to express your feelings about deployment.

If you need support, but don't think that face to face meetings are for you, www.militarystudent.org has pages specifically for teens who have friends or family in the military. The Web site offers chat rooms, forums, advice, and personal stories of teens affected by military life.

If you or someone you know has a loved one who has been deployed, check out www.cfs.purdue.edu/mfri/pages/military/deployment_support.html. There are numerous Web sites and support groups available. No one should have to cope alone. Remember, deployment does not last forever!



BY DALLAS WOODBURN

Dear Dallas,

For the past few weeks I've been feeling really down. Everything seems so pointless. I feel like I hardly know my friends anymore, and like they just hang out with me because they feel sorry for me. I used to love to play tennis and paint, but even these things seem like obligations these days. Please help.

—Weeks of Rainy Days

Dear Weeks of Rainy Days,

You've taken the right step by asking for help. You're not alone, and sadness and depression are hard to get through by yourself. If you don't feel like you can talk to a parent or friend, I urge you to go see your school counselor. They are there for you and are trained to help with this type of situation. Your family doctor is another option. Just don't try to get through this all by yourself. Sometimes simply pouring out all

your frustrations and fears to someone else is a relief. There are also things you can do to help yourself. Exercising releases endorphins and gives you energy, and being outdoors in the sunshine is also a proven mood-lifter—so getting back out on the tennis courts would be great. Eat healthy; stay away from salty, fatty foods and sugary colas that give you a temporary energy buzz—you'll only crash later. And, of course, stay away from alcohol and drugs. If your sadness persists, see your doctor or a therapist who can give



you professional treatment. Life shouldn't be something you get through, it should be something you enjoy—and you owe it to yourself to feel that joy again. I just know you'll get through this blue period and will be painting sunshine scenes again.

Dear Dallas,

My friend Hannah introduced me to her friend Megan, who by coincidence lives just a couple blocks from me. Megan and I get along really well, and if we're bored she'll come over to hang out. The problem is, sometimes Hannah finds out we got together without her, and she gets

really jealous and upset. I feel caught in the middle. Any advice?

—Friendship Triangle

Dear Friendship Triangle,

I understand that you and Megan aren't deliberately leaving Hannah out—sometimes getting together is a matter of convenience, and she lives farther away. But try to step back for a moment and see the situation from Hannah's perspective. She feels like Megan was her friend first, and now she's worried that you and Megan are going to become such close friends that she'll be completely left behind. So the important thing is to show her that you still value her friendship and her company. Maybe invite Hannah over just by herself for a special visit. Also, next time Megan comes over, even if it's just to watch a movie, make a point to call Hannah and invite her, too. Not that I'm saying you and Megan can never hang out anymore—that would just be silly. But whenever you two do hang out without Hannah, try your best not to talk about it in front of her. Hopefully she'll begin feeling more secure in your friendship and won't get so upset if she ever does find out you two hung out without her.

Dear Dallas,

I heard a girl throwing up in the school bathroom. I have one class with her, but I don't know her very well. It's possible she just ate something that disagreed with her, but I'm worried she has a more serious problem.

—Bulimia Witness?

It's Your Turn

Make your opinion heard at www.listenmagazine.org/imlistening and see how your advice stacks up against that of other *Listen* readers. You can see results from past polls here too.



READERS, NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO GIVE ADVICE. SHOULD "BULIMIA WITNESS":

- a. confront the girl about what she saw;
- b. stay quiet unless she witnesses it again; or
- c. tell a parent, teacher, or trusted adult?

BEND or Break?

By Keri Collins
Illustration: Anita Dufalla

When the winds of change blow do you resist to the breaking point, or go with the flow? **TAKE OUR QUIZ AND SEE HOW YOU COPE!**

resilient—able to take change in stride and make the most of it.

Over 30: Wow! You're very

contribute to a solution or work with others during difficult times, change isn't so scary.

20-30: Well done! When you or sabotaging your relationships. in your life, but sometimes think you're adjusting to changes

10-19: Be careful! You may

focus on the positive results of change, and if that doesn't work, ask yourself if this will be important to you in twenty years. Sometimes a little perspective goes a long way.

0-9: Ouch! Any change throws

Question	A	B	C
1	0	2	4
2	3	1	0
3	0	1	5
4	1	0	3
5	0	2	1
6	1	1	5
7	3	0	1
8	0	1	3
9	1	0	3
10	0	3	1

SCORING:



- 1. Your mom loses her job, so your allowance is history. You:**
 - refuse to do your chores if you don't get paid.
 - say, "My allowance is the least of your worries."
 - get a part-time job.
- 2. Your attempt at a new haircut results in disaster; did the stylist use a weedwacker? You:**
 - shrug and say, "It will grow!"
 - invent a wild story to entertain your friends.
 - refuse to leave the house.
- 3. Your favorite coach moves away. You:**
 - quit the team.
 - show up, but don't practice much.
 - rally the team to pull together for the new coach.
- 4. Your best friend gets accepted into your top college pick, and you don't. You:**
 - beg her to reconsider.
 - stop speaking to her.
 - congratulate her and focus on the advantages of your second choice.
- 5. Your dad and stepmom announce they're having a baby. You think:**
 - I bet they'll expect free babysitting.
 - I love babies!
 - Maybe I can be a foreign exchange student!
- 6. The guy/girl you've been dating for ages dumps you. You:**
 - act like nothing's wrong.
 - beg him/her to take you back.
 - give yourself time to be sad and angry, then move on.
- 7. Your parents put the family on a diet. You:**
 - help plan weekly menus.
 - gripe through every meal.
 - eat junk food whenever you're not home.
- 8. Your girlfriend asks you to stop swearing around her. You say:**
 - "Who are you, my mother?"
 - "It's no big deal."
 - "If it's that important, I'll try."
- 9. Your brother's soccer schedule forces you to give up Amnesty International meetings. You:**
 - find someone to drive you.
 - scream, "It's not fair!"
 - share human rights information with people at the soccer games.
- 10. Now that she's dating, your best friend never has time for you. You tell her:**
 - "Your boyfriend's a jerk; break up with him!"
 - "I miss you. When can we have a girls night?"
 - Nothing.

Eban & Ani-Mai

By Dallas Woodburn

Illustration by Jason Cole

Attention Students!
This is an Emergency Situation. We are
going into LOCKDOWN.
Everyone report to the
nearest classroom and
lock the door. I repeat,
everyone immediately
head to the nearest
classroom...



C'mon, SARTHI!
Didn't you hear the
lockdown order?



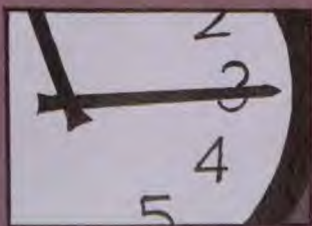
Oh, get real—
it's just a stupid drill.
It always is.

You don't know
that. We could be in
REAL DANGER!





Don't worry,
we're safe in here.
It's going to be
OK.



ATTENTION, STUDENTS,
ATTENTION! All Clear. The
Lockdown is over. I Repeat,
ALL CLEAR.



Man,
that was
big time scary
yesterday.

You can say that
again. I guess there was a
suspicious-looking guy walking
around with a video camera
that someone thought
might be a gun.



SEE?
False alarm.
Everyone was so
freaked-out for
nothing.

The important
thing is to remain calm
and treat every situation
like a real emergency. What's
dangerous is to assume everything
is "just a drill" and not take
it seriously.

Abstinence programs bombard teens with the physical risks of sex

Choosing Your Future

By Michelle Lewis



Can you guess where the federal government poured more than \$150 million last year? Not Iraq, welfare reform, or cancer research. State, public, and private abstinence education programs received the money.

Why does the government care about your sex life? Why is the issue so important that legislatures from California to Massachusetts toss it back and forth every year with the left wing, right wing, and every wing-in-between groups?

America's teen pregnancy rate blows away every other country, and two decades of condom and "safe sex" promotion has resulted in more than 65 million Americans over age 12 having an incurable STD,* according to the Centers for Disease Control. No one argues that abstinence before marriage is the best choice.

Abstinence programs bombard teens with the physical risks of sex before marriage, but how much do you know about the emotional risks? Unfortunately, an article in *USA Today* reports that "sex-ed programs rarely tell girls about rejection, depression, or about the isolating and enraging aftereffects of adults dismissing their pain as 'puppy love.'"

* Sexually transmitted disease

before marriage, but how much do you know about the emotional risks?

Of sexually active girls ages 14-17, 25 percent said they "felt depressed a lot or all of the time in the past week," and more than 14 percent had attempted suicide in the past year. Of their abstinent peers, only 7.7 percent felt similarly depressed and 5.1 percent had attempted suicide, according to a Heritage Foundation study.

If abstinence is the best choice, why is it so hard? Today's culture of sex and instant gratification makes long-term abstinence a struggle for many. Sexual interest starts to peak in the late teens—about 10 years before the average marriage age. Couples in love figure, "Why wait if we're going to be together forever?" But the majority of teen

relationships do not end in marriage, and nothing on the market yet protects against emotional pain.

Of course the old classic "Everybody's doing it" still comes up—but everybody is not "doing it"! Many teens are making abstinence the "cool choice" at their school. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy discovered that 80 percent of girls and 60 percent of boys who are sexually active wish they had waited. Hormones won't always be raging through you. Imagine how you'll feel sharing the priceless gift of yourself on your wedding night.

The freedoms of sexual absti-

nence go far beyond simply avoiding the physical consequences:

- Freedom from the side effects, risks, and worry about failure rates of birth control.

- Freedom from the pressure to marry too soon.

- Freedom to respect yourself enough to say, "No, I'm worth waiting for."

- Freedom from the haunting "ghosts" of past sexual relationships.

- Freedom to enjoy being a teenager!

It's tempting to think, "I'm not a virgin anymore, so who cares?" Don't believe the lie that "it doesn't matter." Put sex in that mental file folder with New Year's resolutions, exercise, and healthy eating. Even if you're not a virgin, you can choose sexual purity beginning right now. Your future, not your past, should guide your actions.

You may face or have already faced consequences of your past decisions. More than anyone else, you know what's at stake. Starting a new page in life will not only free you for the future, but will help you cope with the consequences of your past.

So how do you keep your abstinence commitment from going the way of the latest fad diet? Peer pressure, America's "sex culture," your own emotions, and hormones are all difficult to avoid, ignore, or change. Try these suggestions to get started:

- Don't send a message to others through your dress or actions that you don't intend.

- Don't do drugs or alcohol. They cloud your decision-making ability and lower your resistance.

- Date wisely; don't spend long periods of time alone tempting yourselves.

- Date people with similar values (such as abstinence); keeping

your commitment will be easier.

- Recognize your need for love and what it means. Understanding your vulnerable areas will help protect you from slipping.

- Decide now why you're choosing abstinence and how you plan to keep your commitment, and then set your standards high—before the heat is on. Sign a purity pledge or vow so you have a written record.

Encourage your friends: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy reports:

"Nine out of ten young people (age 12-19) said that it would be a lot easier for teens to delay sex if other teens spoke positively about not having sex."

Choosing abstinence is about freedom, self-respect, and protecting yourself, your current partner, and your future spouse from needless pain. It's about making the smart and best choice, starting now, for your future.

- Freedom from the intense, long-lasting pain of giving your baby up for adoption.

- Freedom from exploiting others or being exploited by others and all the emotions that come with it—guilt, doubt, worry, disappointment, anger, and rejection.

- Freedom to get to know your dating partner as a unique, multifaceted person.

- Freedom to be in control of your body, life, and future—not disrupted by pregnancy, disease, or emotional trauma.



Reach Your Dream Reach Your Dream Reach Your Dream

BY JOSEPH MORRIS

When it comes to making your dreams come true many people think it's impossible, that it would cost way too much money, or they simply don't know what their dream is. Those negative ideas are all dream stoppers and they can make you believe that even if you do get your dream, you must work very hard at it.

Here's a three-step solution that will help you find and achieve your dreams more easily.

1 STEP 1: FIND YOUR DREAMS.

Start by saying, "I know my dream, and it comes to mind."

Even if you don't know your dream, say those words out loud as if you knew they were true, or write it down with the same feeling. This tells your subconscious mind what you expect it to do for you.

Now, to help you identify your dream, answer the following questions.

- * What have you always loved to do or dreamed of doing?
- * What talent do you have that you want to develop further?
- * What contribution do you want to bring to the world in the next 10 years? Thirty years?
- * What work do you want to be doing in 5 or 10 years?

Put the answers together in some way that creates an exciting picture or dream you'd like to have in your future. Write it down, draw a picture of it, or speak it into a recorder.



2 STEP 2: EXAMINE YOUR DREAM

Plan some small steps that will bring you closer to your dream. For example, if it is your dream to run a marathon someday, some of the small steps that would get you closer would be:

- * Do research on what is important in running a marathon.
- * Make a list of questions you want to ask people who run marathons.
- * Find and read books about running marathons.
- * Start a training program.
- * Run smaller races to learn about running races from the "inside."



Dreams Dreams Dreams

Whatever your dream is, create a similar list that will help you clearly identify the steps to your dream.

Begin paying attention to your everyday decisions. Ask yourself if the decision will take you closer to or farther from your dream. For example, would eating fast food or junk food bring you closer to your dream of running a marathon or take you farther from it? Would your use of spare time, money, and even your friendships bring you closer to or farther from your dream?

The benefit of this planning is to make it easier for you to keep your actions and decisions consistent with your dream and steadily move you closer. Planning makes the journey smoother and faster!



3 STEP 3: NOW IT'S TIME FOR ACTION!

* **Write your dream and your short goals on a piece of paper.** Hang that list or chart somewhere so that you will notice it everyday, like on a mirror, a door, or a computer screen. This keeps you on track, but it can also work like a magnet, drawing you to your goal!

This suggestion is very important: *Take some action toward your dream or goals, no matter how small, every single day.*

What you focus on grows. Daily action will keep your dream active in your mind, including your subconscious mind, and surprising things will happen to help you along your way. You may find the right job that teaches you important skills, meet people who can help you, or discover a book that jumps you past some of your goals quickly.

The important thing is to start taking small steps immediately. Those steps will begin to open doors for you, give you information that will clarify your dream, and you will begin to enjoy your dream even in the process of getting there. It will be an adventure that will affect the rest of your life positively.

Those are the three steps to creating your dream, but every now and then you may feel like giving up because it doesn't look like your dream is taking shape. When that happens, take another small step. Get back into action, no matter how small a step it is. Feel grateful that what looks like a failure is actually moving you toward your dream.

No matter how small the step is, those that you take when you feel stuck are the steps that have the biggest impact on your dream and your life. Most races are won by the runner who gets the best head-start. Together, the three steps to your dreams give you a huge head-start to finding and reaching your dreams successfully.

Congratulations. You are on your way to successfully living your dreams!

The important
thing is to start
taking small steps
immediately.



By Anne Buzas

Photos courtesy Matt Morton

Matt Morton: Empowering Others



MATT MORTON, 22, earned his degree in political science and graduated magna cum laude from Stetson University in DeLand, Florida, last year. This year, as he applies to grad school, he's working as the coordinator of the university's Bonner Leadership and Community Outreach Initiatives. He's vice-chair of the National Council on Youth Policy, the founder of the Guatemala Youth Empowerment Project, and a speaker who has delivered dozens of keynote addresses across the country.

But he remembers a time he thought he'd be lucky just to graduate from high school.

"I grew up in kind of a cruddy situation," Matt says. "My father left when I was a baby, and my mother was killed in an airplane crash when I was a child."

Matt and his younger sister went to live with their father after their mother died. "He was a man of good heart, but he was a severe alcoholic, and he married a cocaine addict," Matt says simply.

"There we were for 13 years. The norm was police visits, neglect, and child abuse in our home. I ran away a lot of nights—packed my bag with my Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and chocolate chip cookies. The thing that kept me coming back was my two little sisters were still there, and if I wasn't there, there wouldn't be anyone there for them."

Growing up in that situation Matt became a person filled with cynicism and disillusionment. He was lonely and scared a lot of the time. He didn't care about anything, and it showed—



especially in school, where he didn't do very well. Luckily he encountered a couple of teachers who helped him escape from this negative cycle.

One of them was his high school cross-country coach. "He taught me how to take out my pains and aggressions on the field," Matt recalls. "He was the first to hold very high expectations for me—to push me to achieve. He taught me the power of relationships and empowerment through relationships."

Another important person in Matt's life was his sophomore English teacher, who urged him to get involved in a local "legacy project" with other teens. Matt was

reluctant, but “finally gave it a shot just to get her off my back,” he says.

All kinds of kids worked together for this project—kids of different races from different socioeconomic backgrounds. But they were all striving to benefit the community. The project they decided could best do this was a youth empowerment center—a safe,



fun, teen-run place where teens could hang out.

“All of a sudden this experience gave me an outlet, gave me a channel for my frustrations as a kid,” Matt says. “I started to see my struggles as a source of strength and compassion for other youth in the community, many of whom had gone through worse things than I’d ever experienced.” Together, Matt and the other teens raised \$195,000 to open the teen center, which serves about 1,500 people.

Then Matt connected with a

foundation and decided he would see what could come out of that relationship.

Eventually the foundation gave \$1 million for the teens to build four other youth

empowerment centers. Once cynical and shy, Matt was becoming an outgoing kid who really believed in a cause—help-

youth empowerment across the country, and he developed a reputation as an expert in the field.

Throughout college he continued following the suggestions of the two teachers who’d first inspired him. He was on Stetson’s track and cross-country teams (and was captain of the cross-country team his senior year), and he’s continued to seek out opportunities to help teens discover that they can make a difference.

In his current position at his alma mater, he supervises a program he founded when he was a freshman: CAUSE, a youth outreach program that became Stetson’s largest service organization. He’s staff advisor for Youth as Resources, too, a “mini-foundation” that allows kids as young as five to apply for grants to fund service projects—like a kindergarten class that wants to build a garden at their school.

His goal continues to be helping teens speak out on issues they feel passionate about, and recognize that despite their youth, they have the power to make a difference. But now his goal has broadened, and he hopes to use his skills and experience

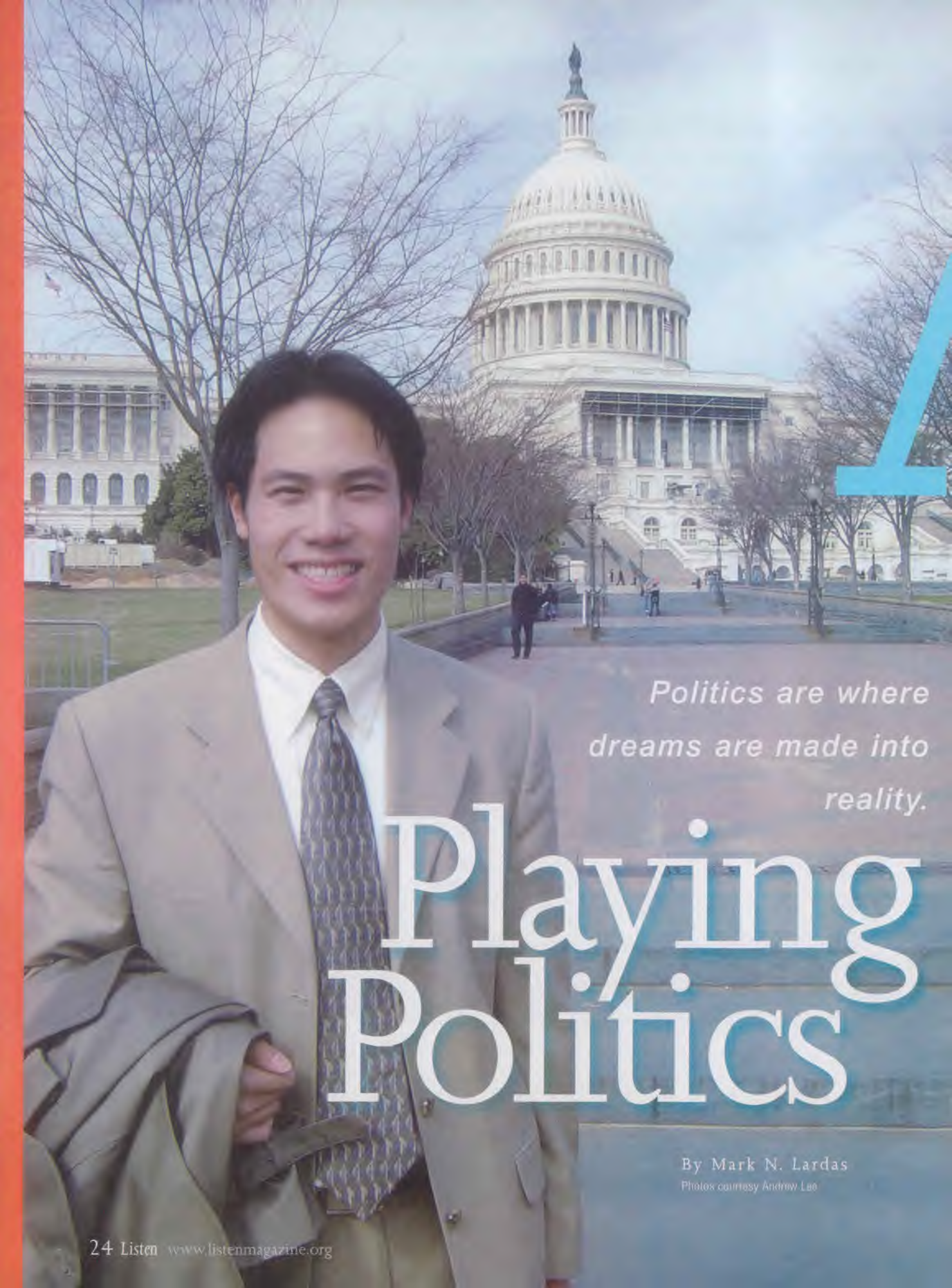
ing teens discover the power of their own voices to make a positive change in the world around them.

When the White House held its inaugural Youth Summit in 2001, Matt was invited to give the keynote address, and his life took another unexpected turn. After that, he received many invitations to speak on the issue of



internationally, rather than just focusing on youth in the United States.

“I feel that young people can be the answers to many of these conflicts” around the world, he explains. “I feel like there’s a lot of hope in that generation.”

A photograph of a man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a light-colored suit jacket, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is holding a dark jacket over his left arm. In the background is the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., with its iconic dome and neoclassical architecture. Bare trees and a paved walkway are also visible. A large, stylized blue number '1' is positioned on the right side of the image.

*Politics are where
dreams are made into
reality.*

Playing Politics

By Mark N. Lardas
Photos courtesy Andrew Lee

ANDREW LEE IS A POLITICAL JUNKIE.

ALWAYS HAS BEEN. HE RAN FOR CLASS PRESIDENT IN

HIGH SCHOOL. HE HAS WORKED ON POLITICAL

CAMPAIGNS AS A VOLUNTEER. SOME KIDS FOLLOWED BASEBALL

PLAYERS—LEE TRACKED POLITICIANS AND WONDERED WHY NO

ONE ELSE HIS AGE SEEMED TO BE INTERESTED.

It was not like politics were his life, although his idea of a great radio station is National Public Radio. He was into sports, too. He was a baseball umpire for a while. He followed football. When he was a freshman at Claremont McKenna College, a roommate introduced him to fantasy football.

"He was really excited over fantasy football," Lee recalled. "And I was wondering why folks could not get as excited about politics. Politics changes people's lives." Then it hit him. Why not fantasy congress? Something like fantasy football, only instead of putting together a team of football players, you draft members of Congress.

Having played fantasy baseball, Andrew knew the basics of fantasy sports. He was able to develop a political version of the game. Players put together a team made up of House Members and Senators. Points were scored as legislators in your team pushed bills through Congress. You could substitute one member for another on your team.

The game worked and was a blast. The information needed to score the game was publicly available—on the Internet through the Thomas Web site (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>). The problem? Andrew lacked the database and computer skills to package everything. Frustrated, he set the game aside.

Arjun Lal, a computer science major, was a friend of Andrew's. Arjun



was taking a distributed software architecture course and needed something for a group project. Something that involved the Internet—and Web applications—and putting something together that a lot of people would be using. Something like a Web-based game. In fact, the game that Andrew kept talking about, Fantasy Congress, would work perfectly.

Arjun and Ethan Andyshak, a graphics design student who was another friend of Andrew's, recruited another computer type in Arjun's

class, Ian Hafkenschiel to help. They had a design project.

They developed the game over the summer, spread across the country. Andrew was in Washington D. C.; Ethan was in Lawrence, Kansas; Ian was in San Jose, and Arjun in Claremont, California. They built the game over the Internet.

Soon they had a working prototype of the game. In the summer of 2006 they tested it. They got volunteers from among the active Truman Scholars and Udall Scholars programs. Both are for students interested in public service—political junkies, like

Andrew. The play-testers had a blast.

Finally, they went public with the game. With the help of Claremont McKenna College they set up a Web site, www.fantasycongress.org, that is open to the public. Anyone who wants to can sign up and play politics.

The game plays a lot like fantasy sports. Players create an account, join a league, and draft a team. Instead of athletes, a team is made up of four senators and twelve members of the House of Representatives. You can mix and match parties, but your team has

to include both senior and junior lawmakers in both Houses of Congress. A "season" is one session of Congress.

Points are scored as legislation sponsored by members of your team moves through the legislative process. You can get as little as five points (for introducing a piece of legislation) to as many as 50 points (when the bill is signed into law) for each step. Points are also scored when a bill sponsored by a member of your team is voted upon. More points are scored if the sponsored bill passes than if it is defeated.

The game has captured national attention—and a lot of fans. "We opened the site this summer," stated Andrew, who spoke to *Listen* in November 2006. "We already have 44,000 registered users playing the game."

Each member of the team got something different out of the experience. Arjun never really paid much attention to Congress before becoming involved with Fantasy Congress. He has learned a lot since then. For him as well as Ian, the real fun was meeting the challenge of building a Web site that could absorb the rapid growth Fantasy Congress experienced, and making it more interesting for the users.

Ian got a chance to exercise his graphics design skills in a forum that thousands could see. He has since graduated from Claremont McKenna, and is now working professionally as a graphic designer, but still stays connected to the project.

What does Andrew see in the future of Fantasy Congress? "We want to tap into the education market," says Lee. He would like to see high school-level social studies and government classes set up teams and leagues, then run them over the course of a semester.

"Politics are where dreams are made into reality," states Lee. "You do not have to be a political junkie, but I would like to see people care about politics the same way they care about sports." He sees Fantasy Congress as



one way to do that.

He wants to improve the game they have developed. "I would like to take it to the next level. Add value to it. One thing we are thinking about is allowing people to weigh different types of legislation differently. If you are into environmental issues, you can set it up so you get more points with environmental legislation."

Where does Andrew see himself in twenty years? "Married, with kids, working in some aspect of public service," hopefully back in Colorado, where he grew up. "I feel connected to that state. Back in the 1870s and 1880s one of my great-great-

granduncles helped build the Union Pacific Railroad in Colorado."

Will he be in Congress by then? He would rather work behind the scenes. "I want to be involved in politics, running a campaign."

It looks like Andrew Lee will still be playing politics twenty years from now. Until then, you can join him playing politics through Fantasy Congress.



What's up with that?

My friend's brother, who is in the Army, just came home from Iraq. He wasn't injured or anything, but he acts all weird now. He seems really jumpy and depressed and he drinks a lot more than he used to. Is this normal?
Kelly, age 15

Unfortunately, Kelly, about 30 percent of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan show symptoms of combat stress, also called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Common symptoms can include depression, bouts of anger, nightmares and flashbacks, detachment from others, numb feelings, and problems with drugs and alcohol. Some soldiers begin using marijuana and prescription drugs in combat zones to cope with the violence, while others become addicted to pain medications being taken for their injuries. It sounds like your friend's brother needs counseling services and possibly treatment for problems with alcohol as well.



When I was at a party last week some of the guys got really plastered. One of them tried to jump from the roof into the pool and ended up breaking his leg and messing up his hip. What was this idiot thinking?
Ryan, age 17

Good question, Ryan—the answer is probably “not much.” Alcohol basically blocks the brain from making

wise decisions, and it also impairs coordination. Unfortunately, he isn't the only one getting injured when drunk—one recent study found that about 40 percent of injured teens treated in a hospital emergency room tested positive for alcohol or other drugs. Interestingly, about 40 percent of all traffic accidents are also related to alcohol. We live in a culture that laughs at and excuses drunken behavior, but the consequences are often very serious. If you find yourself at one of these parties in the future, avoid the alcohol and resist the urge to laugh—it only encourages such dangerous behaviors. If you can convince others to do the same you'll send a message that such behaviors are neither funny nor smart.

My little sister thinks that smoking is so glamorous. None of my family members smoke and she's only seven years old, so where does she get the idea that smoking is cool?
Beverly, age 16

Well, Beverly, your little sister may be reacting to the smoking she sees on TV and in movies. One recent study found that children who watched favorable images of smoking on TV or in movies had a 90 percent greater risk of becoming smokers later in life. Talk about the power of the media! Although TV and movie producers claim that smoking shows “human behavior” and adds atmosphere to their films, tobacco companies have worked to influence kids in this way for a long time. You can fight these messages by telling your sister that smoking is really nasty and dangerous; little kids look up to their older brothers and sisters and you can get your sister thinking about the dangers of smoking before she decides to try it for herself.



Song in My

My turn came and I
stumbled forward, certain I'd
make a fool of myself in front of
half the school.

By Karen M. Lee

I LOVED TO SING. I sang while washing dishes, doing laundry, making my bed. When I did homework, I hummed. I fell asleep at night with music flowing through my mind.

"You should try out for chorus," Mom suggested. She was always suggesting ways for me to be part of things, popular and involved.

I shrugged. Problem was, I was painfully shy. If someone so much as looked at me I quaked. If someone spoke to me I felt heat flood my face and knew I'd turned tomato-red all over.

"I don't think so," I muttered to Mom. She never got it, never understood that shyness wasn't someplace I stopped by once in awhile. It was where I lived, every moment of every day.

Me—try out for chorus? Nope, never happen.

But Mom didn't give up easily.

"Why not?" she wanted to know. "It won't hurt to try," she insisted. She kept at me. "What have you got to lose?"

I shrugged. How could I explain? I knew what would happen. My heart would slam against my rib cage. My head would pound so loudly I wouldn't be able to hear my own voice, which, by the way, would squeak, crack, shake, and falter.

When Mom kept at it, I fled to my room. Did I want to sing in chorus? Oh, yes. I wanted that with all my heart. I wanted to sing. I wanted to be part of things. I wanted to open my mouth and let beautiful music pour out. I just couldn't.

My closest friend, another painfully shy girl who kept to the background the way I did, astounded me by agreeing with Mom when I told her.

"Oh, do it!" she urged me, as if trying out for chorus was Mount Everest and she would cheer me on every inch of the climb. "Do it, do it. I know you can. I'll even go with you."

Gathering every scrap of courage I could find, I went. My friend came to hold my arm when I trembled to be sure I didn't collapse.

The crowd was large. Chorus was fun and popular. It seemed half the school showed up for tryouts. Cute, pretty, popular girls sang with hands clasped in front of their chests, throwing out their arms in dramatic gestures as they finished. Boys sang, shifting weight from foot to foot,

Heart



Illustration: Terry Crews

clearly not totally comfortable. Kids with genuine talent sang, and we all applauded afterward.

My turn came and I stumbled forward, certain I'd make a fool of myself in front of half the school. But when the chorus teacher pointed to me with my cue, somehow I forgot everything and music poured from me. I sang with my whole heart.

Still, I knew I wasn't good enough. I knew I hadn't made the cut. My friend squeezed my arm and whispered against my ear, "You tried. Good for you!" I felt a shaky sort of triumph. I'd done it. I hadn't fainted or run crying from the room. It was a victory of sorts.

When everyone had their turn, the chorus teacher checked his notes and began reading off names, those lucky few who had been chosen. Disappointment clutched my chest, but something rose up in me—I would not give up. I would practice and try again.

As kids crowded from the room, the chorus teacher called me over to

wait. Did he feel sorry for me? Or did he sense in me something strong and deep that would never die? Whatever it was, he asked me a series of questions while my friend stood waiting, a puzzled expression on her face. For a long moment he studied me. I wondered why. He'd chosen the number of singers he needed.

"All right," he told me. "Your voice isn't strong, but we can work on that. I can see how much you love singing." He handed me the sheet music and told me, "You're in. Work hard and don't miss rehearsals. I think you can do this."

And I did. I never missed a rehearsal. I sang with my whole heart. I sang if I had a cold. I sang if I

felt bad. I sang no matter what. I didn't become astoundingly popular, and my voice never got as strong as I would have liked, but I sang. I stuck with it and stayed in chorus. I never got solos, but I was solid, always knew the music, and always put everything into it.

I guess Mom was right in a way. Sometimes you have to kind of step out by faith and make the effort, even when something is really difficult to do. Sometimes you have to risk making a fool of yourself when you care about something. And sometimes you can reach dreams you never thought possible. I did.



Spotlight

By Mary Rahn

Ever wonder what it's like to be involved in the heart of the United States government in Washington, D.C.? The Senate Page Program lets high school eleventh-graders spend a semester in the U.S. Senate. Working inside the congressional complex, which includes the Capitol building and the adjacent congressional offices, pages serve the Senators however they are needed, whether that means delivering correspondence and legislative material,

Marc Triller



preparing the Chamber for Senate sessions, or carrying bills and amendments to the desk. When pages are not working in the Senate Chamber, they are in school, doing homework, or touring Washington, D.C.

Marc Triller, a very driven and accomplished graduate of the Page Program, shares his experiences and lessons learned in the following interview. Prepare to be inspired!

LISTEN: Why did you decide to get involved?

MARC: I've always enjoyed studying politics, so when I heard about the program, I knew it was for me. My parents and my former



principal encouraged me to apply, so I did.

LISTEN: What is the application process like?

MARC: My senator's office required me to submit an essay, three letters of recommendation, a list of my interests and activities, and my high school transcript. There's also an interview process.

If you're interested, contact your senator's office to request an application—and don't delay! It's extremely competitive. From all 50 states, only 30 or fewer pages are accepted per semester. You'll want time to work on your application.

LISTEN: What are some difficulties you overcame as a page?

MARC: I think the biggest difficulty I faced was finding a balance between having fun and doing well in school and work. I'm pretty focused, so at first I spent almost all my time studying. But I was missing out on opportunities to build relationships and enjoy my time in D.C. I found a balance, and I was elected class president, graduated with straight A's, and I even won the awards for leadership and U.S. History.

LISTEN: What lessons did you learn as a page?

MARC: I have a much better understanding of the way our government works. I was exposed to a wide variety of ideas on many different issues, so I became more open to other people's opinions. I really learned the value of hard work, but I also learned to relax and lighten up, or else life will be no fun!

LISTEN: What are your plans for the future?

MARC: Ever since eighth grade, my dream has been to go to the United States Military Academy at West Point and be an Army officer. To my utmost delight, two days before Christmas I received my letter of acceptance! It's a dream come true!

LISTEN: What is your advice for young people who want to get involved?

MARC: Page school is extremely challenging. But in the long run, all the hardships are well worth the effort. I made so many memories and forged some great friendships. When I graduated from Page school, I had such an incredible feeling of pride and achievement. As in anything you do, it's important to recognize there will be rough stretches, but to commit to the long-term payoffs.

MODEL YOUR LIFE

ATTENTION: THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS IS NOW ENROLLING NEW STUDENTS!

But wait! Before you sign up, you might want to reconsider. This is one of the only schools that you can afford to drop out of. At The School of Hard Knocks you're agreeing to live life using only the trial and error process.

You might be thinking, "What's wrong with that?" Sure, it's extremely important to learn from your mistakes, but life is too short to learn only from your mistakes. And on top of that, this approach can be a real painful process. There's an old quote that backs this up perfectly: "The smart man learns from his mistakes, but the wise man learns from the mistakes of others."

According to Thomas Edison, it took 14 months and thousands of attempts to create the light bulb. So here's our question: If you were to start your own experiment of re-creating a light bulb, would you start from scratch or look into what Edison discovered first? It's a no-brainer, right? Of course you'd use his research based on what he discovered over 100 years ago.

Your journey through life should be lived in the same way. Life doesn't have to be one giant experiment. You don't need to reinvent the wheel each day. If you can learn from other people, you'll save yourself a lot of time, money, and energy.



**CONTACT
US:**

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KentandKyle@coolstuffmedia.com

When Sir Isaac Newton was asked how he accomplished so much in so little time, he answered, "I've stood on the shoulders of giants." You see, even the most brilliant people this world has ever seen realize they can't possibly learn everything on their own. Life is a journey and process of learning. And the quickest way to get what and where you want is to learn from other people and take advantage of what they have discovered and learned on their journey through life.

There is practically nothing that you are going through or will go through that someone else hasn't already experienced. What does this mean to you? It means that there are many people who can offer their

insight to you . . . if you're willing to ask.

Parents, teachers, coaches, older siblings, aunts, uncles, and even books are great resources that can offer you valuable life lessons. Save yourself some pain; instead of enrolling in the School of Hard Knocks, see what you can learn from those who've already attended it.

The Next Step . . .

Now is your chance to take the extra step to skip the School of Hard Knocks. Go to www.listenmagazine.org and click on our picture. We guarantee that if you take the time to participate in these exercises, you will walk away with some practical tools and insight that you can use to build the life you want.

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