

## Meacham Park Scholarship Application Essay

**"Who is your hero in your community, and why?" By: Madison Shead**

What is a community leader? Some would define this person as someone who takes responsibility for the well-being and the improvement of the people in their communities. They might be someone who wants to improve their local community or someone who desires to improve a global community. Typically these individuals don't wait for others to tackle an issue, they often take the first steps to tackle the problem, like 17 yr old Mary Grace Henry. When Mary Grace Henry learned that young girls in Africa were being forced into marriages and denied their educations, she wanted to make a change. She created an accessory line, which has sold more than 11,000 items and provided education for 45 impoverished girls in Uganda and Kenya. It's clear that sometimes all it takes is one person to make a change, thus impacting a community and this case, a global community. Mary Henry is one of my community leader shero's. Even at her young age, she was able to utilize her resources and make a difference not only for those 45 girls in Africa, but on generations to follow.

While a typical day for most leaders is not as dramatic as Dr. Martin Luther King's Freedom March, still most community leaders make a significant impact on someone or something within their reach. Impacts like the kind Johnetta Elzie has made on civil rights. The 25-year-old Elzie found her calling to serve on August 9th, immediately following the Mike Brown shooting. Her live video of the demonstrations earned her a massive social media following, quickly earning her a role as one of the leaders of the protest. Like so many community leaders, Ms. Elzie didn't wake up and decide to form a protest group. She recognized a community problem and decided something needed to be done to correct the crumbling justice system. Today, Ms. Elzie is one of the leaders in the activist group *We The Protesters* and co-edits the Ferguson protest newsletter *This Is the Movement*, which has some 15,000 subscribers—and she reaches another 100,000 followers via Twitter. Because of her passion she was recently featured

on the cover of Essence Magazine and the Los Angeles Times has named her one of the twenty-one people on their list of "The new civil rights leaders: Emerging voices in the 21st century" based on her activism work. In the days of a growing negative social media usage, Ms. Elzie has used this tool for the positive and for this reason along with her activism; she too is one of my community shero's. She's inspired a new generation of civil right leaders to be voice in their communities and all communities where injustice is being served.

Although I've listed a two community leaders whom I admire because of the work their doing in the community and the impact they are making on the lives of so many unrepresented voices, there's still room for more. Everyday new social injustices are brought to the forefront. In order to tackle the multitude of challenges we face across this country we all must play a part, because one or two leaders can't possibly address all the complex problems our communities face. Therefore, I encourage all of us to make a difference in our community; whether that's hosting a birthday party for children in domestic violence shelters or hosting a clothing drive for children in foster homes. Together we can make a difference.