

The Importance of Inspiration - The 2012 Ben Franklin experience

By Vilde M. Danielsen



This summer I got the unique opportunity, together with Emma Moberg, to be the Norwegian participant at the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship Summer Institute (BFTF) in the U.S. The program is designed to foster relationships among youth from European countries and America. By encouraging positive relationships among various ethnic, religious, and national groups, BFTF gives youth an opportunity to get a greater understanding of our global world. I feel extremely fortunate that I got the opportunity to be a part of this program. This experience has given me new knowledge and perspectives, as well as friends for life. Still, I am maybe the most thankful for the inspiration and confidence I gained to pursue my dreams and explore the world in new ways.

After spending a month talking to people from all over Europe and the U.S., I learned a lot about their countries, cultures, religion, opinions and personal lives. I began to see life through their eyes and doing so I also learned a great deal about myself and my opinions, prejudices and boundaries. I believe that my experience at BFTF has provided me with a better understanding both of other people and my own life. Meeting with so many engaged and interesting people also inspired me to push through my own boundaries and limitations.

At BFTF I understood that the importance of inspiration is not valued enough in Norwegian society. Most young people live their lives day by day without thinking about why they do the things they do. We go to school and do our homework because we are supposed to. To be responsible and conscientious is important, but this summer I also realized what a powerful tool it is to be inspired and passionate about your work and what you do. In addition to this I learned how to use this inspiration to achieve my goals and inspire others to make the most out of their lives.

Since many young people experience a lack of inspiration, programs like BFTF are an important contribution to achieving a better quality of life. The classes and teachers are exceptional and have inspired several participants to make their own programs afterwards. The reason why BFTF is so successful is the composition of the place and the people. I believe that through being a member of a group who eat, sleep, work, explore, laugh and cry together for an entire month, the fellows create and share a special bond and change as

persons. Through participating in heated discussions and ordinary conversations as well as listening to specialists who share their knowledge, we all got new perspectives. Watching people express themselves in beautiful ways as dance, art, poems, speeches, music, singing, sports and

photography you also feel the need to explore yourself and learn how to express yourself as well. BFTF show people what they can accomplish in life and all the great opportunities life brings. The experience has given me an urge to continue my journey.



Being inspired is an empowering gift we should cherish every day. With inspiration comes motivation to act and with actions we can change the world as well as our life or local conditions. The lack of inspiration in Norwegian class rooms is severe. Students are not motivated because they have difficulties with imagining their lives after high school. They are confronted with decisions that can change the rest of their life, but the feeling of failure is for many a daily struggle. How can they become our next generation of leaders when they are not inspired to work towards it? And how can they become inspirational people for the next generation if they not understand the importance of inspiration?



We need to change the mentality at the Norwegian school and BFTF is a good role model for this work. It is important that young people feel that it is good to be special and to have ambitions in life. They need to learn how to engage well in society and achieve the sense of belonging. If they do not take initiative and work hard they will not be able to stand out at the international work marked. The expectations they meet

when they enter the work marked will shock them. However, most people manage the life after school and are able to find their path, but the ones that fall through and are overwhelmed with what life brings need guidance and inspiration to work towards their goals. The

Norwegian education system needs to acknowledge the importance of inspiration as BFTF did, and help the students realize that they can indeed make a difference and be inspirational.

At BFTF I met people that share positive energy and encourage and stimulate the best of me. They made me feel special and with their eagerness they inspired me to open up for new opportunities. Today I have the inspiration, drive and confidence which is needed to continue on the path to become a more engaged and proud human being and I thank the American embassy in Norway and BFTF for this great opportunity.