



JENNA'S STORY

Life Skills | Leadership Skills | Social Impact

The Call to Action

The likelihood that a young person becomes a responsible citizen dramatically increases when they engage in their community at an early age, empowering them to have a substantial impact on their world.

The Need

"Kids today are being pushed academically but are not being taught life skills. Students are graduating from all levels of school with good grades but are still emotionally and socially behind." -Tim Elmore, *generation (i)Y*

Words of Inspiration

"I've come to believe that each of us had a personal calling that's as unique as a fingerprint - and that the best way to succeed is to discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of service ... " -Oprah Winfrey



Mentor Me Learning in Action

Youth today, more than ever, need a space to connect to a bigger purpose and to feel part of a community. Students in the Mentor Me Learning program experience this first hand, and the authentic stories of transformation - for both the participant and the community - are a testament to the changemaking potential of our youth when given the support, time and tools.

This is the story of Jenna, a 10th grader from Huntington Beach attending Marina High School. At the culmination of the Spring Youth Leadership Program, Jenna had created a service project, found two job-shadowing opportunities, partnered with three businesses, implemented a fundraising campaign, and gave back to her community in a positive way.

Here is a glimpse into Jenna's experience with Mentor Me Learning:

The following account was written by Mentor Me Learning's founder and lead mentor for the Spring Leadership Program, Ashley Dos Santos, with contributions from Marissa Nadjarian, Board of Advisors (2019).



Our Philosophy

Programs go through a four-step Student-Driven inquiry process that focuses on Life Skills, Social Impact & Leadership

- **My Self:** What are my actual interests? Passions? My strengths? Weaknesses? Why is it important to know this?
- **My Community:** What communities am I a part of? What are the challenges in the community? Who is working towards solutions?
- **Me in My Community:** How can I use my interests & strengths to support my community? What type of project can I create? How do I create an internship?
- **Me Tomorrow:** What have I accomplished? Learned about myself? About my community? How do I envision myself being active tomorrow?

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them."
-Lady Bird Johnson

The Power of Me

"You have a right to be exactly who you are." -Michelle Obama

The first phase of the MML program guides students through a self-inquiry process. Through discussion, activities and the creation of a safe space, Jenna was able to see herself in a different, or more authentic, light. She learned that she thrived through challenges and socializing, and that she was interested in fashion, design and helping her peers.

My Community

Once Jenna had a better understanding of herself and her passions, Mentor Me led Jenna through the process of finding a mentor to support her exploration of a possible career path in interior design. We emailed a handful of local designers. Eventually we lucked out and an amazing designer agreed to support Jenna through the process of developing a project. Rona of *Grace Blue Design* offered to support Jenna with a project once she was able to develop an idea for one.

Solutions and Innovation

After identifying a mentor that could help Jenna explore a vocation that interested her, next was exploring community businesses that met her criteria for "helping others."

Jenna conducted research, made phone calls and emailed. Eventually we were able to find a job shadowing

opportunity for her with a case manager at *Share Our Selves Shelter*. In addition to *Share Our Selves*, Jenna learned about a local youth shelter called *Robyne's Nest*. Between the two organizations, *Robyne's Nest* was one that resonated most with Jenna and one that she could imagine doing a service project with. *Robyne's Nest* was a space where she could develop a project that served her community and feed her passion for art and design.



My Place as a Changemaker

Jenna was inspired by pictures of a current *Robyne's Nest* youth home; after viewing them she imagined young girls like herself living there and thought they should have something, “younger, more happy and that was less like a collection of grandma's old furniture.” Jenna now had a vocational mentor, a community organization to support and had found it all based off of her very own interests and passions. She was on her way to developing entrepreneurial skills and making a large social impact on her community.

Creating Partnerships

Soon after coordinating the project details with *Robyne's Nest* and *Grace Blue Design*, Jenna created a Go Fund Me Page to raise money for the project. With the coordination of a Mentor Me Learning Mentor, Jenna setup a meeting to visit the house with Rona and the founder of *Robyne's Nest*. At their first team meeting they assessed the needs of the residents of the home and created a project proposal.



Action Project

Jenna's design Mentor, Rona, then sent us a plan of attack for the makeover of the two living rooms. Jenna recruited her father and a couple other volunteers to help paint a large wall in one of the living rooms. She was responsible for coordinating a date to paint, purchasing the paint, choosing the color and finding volunteers to do the work. Next she went through a list of items to purchase that was recommended by the interior designer. Jenna had to go through the list and modify it based on her limited budget. The final stage was making a second team visit to the house to bring all the makeover materials --curtains, rods, pillows, art, lamps-- and officially makeover the two living rooms.

The Mentor Me Learning Experience

By going through the Mentor Me Learning Social Innovation and Changemaking Process, Jenna was able to take time to think about what she was passionate about -- on a personal level and on community impact level. She was then able to do something about it by (1) connecting with a professional that could expose her to a possible career of interest and (2) creating a project that supported the work of a community organization.

Jenna was able to develop life skills, leadership skills and learn the value of making a positive social impact in her community. She was able to learn by doing, to learn through experience and to learn by creating something that had an actual impact in the real world. A learning opportunity that she would not have had at her local high school.

Jenna's service-project (or what some would call social venture) is something that will set her apart when applying to college, a job or an internship. But most importantly, this experience gave Jenna the opportunity to explore HER real world through a service-oriented lens, giving her the tools and space to reflect on what she is actually passionate about.

Our Mission



Our mission is to empower young people to embrace their best self, connect to their communities through internships and service projects and be innovators of social change for a better world.