



Kallie (Kathleen) Lang's DAREarts story

Kallie is a 2011 DAREarts Leadership Award Recipient

Every person in the grasp of this universe is very similar. We all have one heart, one mind; we are all made of the same ingredients, same skin, flesh, bones. But within the compound, each and every one of us is special, unique. **Each one of us has their own story.** This is mine.

Soon after rolling into high school, one will face many questions similar to "What do you have in mind for your future career?" and "Are you going to post-secondary, for what?" One of them may have also been, "What is your long term goal?" I have been asked this a plenty of times and had trouble answering it until one day I was suddenly hit with the answer... the perfect answer. **"My long term goal is to get 'better'...** *To always be reaching, no matter what for. If it's for simple things like knowledge, or to be a better artist, a better person, to more about the world and what it has out there for me to learn about and explore."* A friend had once asked me this very question before I realised myself what my goal was. I answered, "I don't know. I just want to get better..." He replied, "That's good. **If your goal is to get better, you will go far [in life].**" I will never forget those words because my eyes were opened that instant. Reaching for 'better' is infinite and nothing could stop me now.

It all started when I was in grade four. By that time I had already been very enthused by visual arts, but also that kid who loved to be weird and make people laugh. My homeroom teacher called me up, and asked me if I wanted to attend something called DAREarts. **I was a bit clueless then, but the sound of 'art' tingled in me** and I took up the offer. I was immediately hooked up with someone who would wait for the bus with me and after the first few classes I had made many friends. I was exposed to a number of different and new art forms, professional artists and great teachers to lead the way. I discovered not only the wonders and potential of all these arts, but the history and arts of past time eras. **Without DAREarts, I would never have developed my limitless appreciation and admiration for The Arts.** Every year in, we were open to more new places to visit, more new places to meet, and in the end, even when the core grade four to eight programs ended, I continued to a school with a dual-thrust art program. Since seven years ago, I now intend to pursue a life in creativity and arts. Meeting other artists like me inspired me greatly, and I enjoyed learning, teaching new things to one other. Hunting for other artists is when I came upon the friend who dealt *The Question* that changed the course of my life forever, and lead it onto the infinite train tracks towards being better.

But life likes to throw things at you. Sometimes it throws banana peels, sometimes knives. As a teenager, I have gotten more banana peels than knives. I do feel though, there are certain restrictions that being a teenager puts on one, and there are often (too often) adults that will judge a teenager to be a thief, drinking, drug abusing, troublemaker. That is not true for many teenagers, and it is frustrating to not being seen as who we are. I will generally just be friendly, smile, and greet people, to be polite and to show that not all teenagers have bad intentions. I have always been the type of person who doesn't easily fall into peer pressure and trends. **I like to do what I love, not what someone else loves** or what someone else wants me to do. It is also the reason I have always been apart from drug abuse, gangs and parties, because I don't feel the need to impress anyone by doing something that is bad for me. I care not only for my own personal health and well-being, but the people around me and how they would be affected. Maybe it is because **I appreciate myself for being special, creative,** and I stick with that and friends who accept that instead of throwing it all away. Maybe I'm clever enough to know the horrible

things that could happen to one by making the wrong choices. Maybe it's my will... Maybe all of the above.

Although self-appreciation is good, sometimes it has its side effects. For me, making priorities is a little bumpy. My priority-making is often done with me in the pointer, and people around it. **I start with things that I feel is important.** I take the risk of dressing in a unique, different style, not to impress anyone, not for attention, but **for myself, to express my own immense love for art and creativity.** I won't do something someone has told me to do just so they would look at me better. And my weakness is there. It is the reason I am myself, and strong in opinions, but also where my procrastination on schoolwork comes in. I may drop everything to help a friend on her assignment instead of working on mine.

Helping people is something else I have always loved doing. I volunteer to help out or join clubs or programs to help make changes, spread awareness or just to learn and have fun. Plenty of times I have volunteered without even collecting my hours! (I have done that for DAREarts.) It is simply because **I don't volunteer for numbers on a page but because I enjoy helping people and making an experience more enjoyable for everyone.** I don't enjoy watching friends or classmates fighting, disagreeing, or people who do not cooperate. When situations are unbalanced, I will try my best to find a solution to please both sides. I have a friend who always teases me about being what he calls a 'goody-goody'; a person who cares about everyone's feelings too much and has to do everything right. I laugh him off because I don't think I'm really a 'goody-goody' but I really **try my best to be considerate and think about how my actions will affect others** before I do them.

In the end, I really hope that if I continue to smile, I will be able to inspire others to love exploring and learning, appreciate the Arts, try new activities, always think of others, to just find who they are within. That way, all and everyone could unite and smile together. My motto has always been, **"You only truly learn from experience."** You won't know how to hold a hand until you feel another in your own and smile.