

Charlie Hinderliter's speech given at the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Conference on Sunday, June 25, 2006 in Washington, DC

Everyone likes to see the finished product of their work, and for this program, that finished product is the alumni.

For me, the *We the People* program was a life shaping influence. The *We the People* program awoke in me a dormant interest in politics that had been there for some time but had not really surfaced. The passion of my teacher and the engaging thought provoking curriculum set me on my current path. It is a direct result of this program that I am now working on my Ph.D. in political science and hope to teach and to be a public servant. It has been an honor to be able to continue to work with the *We the People* program since I was a student in it and it has been through that that I have met some of the most amazing people I know, teachers and coordinators and students in this program.

In my opinion, though, stories like mine are not why this program is important. It is important because of the effect that it has on those that do not go into public service. It is important because of the effect that it has on those that it does not change their vocation, but it does change them nonetheless.

It is my classmates, whose stories are more important. It is the teacher, the waitress and aspiring artist, restaurant manager, veterinarian, administrative assistant, biologist, soldier, and the counselor that are important. They are important because they are all now informed and active citizens that vote. They can understand the political issues and the constitutional ramifications of them, they are informed, they are active in their communities, and they vote. That is what we strive for, informed and engaged citizens.

If you haven't heard such stories, talk to some of the alumni or teachers and listen to their stories.

Be proud that the end result of our work is informed, active citizens.