

## Which Will Make the Bigger Difference?

*Here's a story of how one man has introduced America's free enterprise system to over 280,000 high school sophomores in all 50 states across America.*

When actor Hugh O'Brian, who portrayed television's famous legendary hero, Wyatt Earp, was invited by Dr. Albert Schweitzer to visit the well-known hospital that Schweitzer had founded in 1913 on the banks of the Ogooue River in Lambarene, Africa, he was probably unaware that the meeting would have such tremendous impact on his life.

O'Brian accepted Schweitzer's invitation in the summer of 1958. Having long admired the German doctor-missionary-theologian-musician, O'Brian, then 33, spent nine inspirational days at the clinic where Schweitzer and other volunteer doctors cared for patients, including many with leprosy, without the convenience of running water or electricity.

"He was a great humanitarian who could have done anything he wanted in the world," O'Brian reflected, "and there he was in the middle of Africa taking care of people."

The 83-year-old Schweitzer, who had received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the "Brotherhood of Nations," was greatly concerned about global peace. Impressed that this young American would make the effort to travel by airliner, bush plane and canoe just to visit him, the doctor shared his thoughts and ideas with O'Brian.

Schweitzer believed that the United States was the only country in the world with the ability to bring about global peace. "He said the United States must take a leadership role," O'Brian recounts, "or we are a lost civilization."

It was a memorable visit. As O'Brian departed, Dr. Schweitzer took his hand and asked, "Hugh, what are you going to do with this?"

"He really made me think about a lot of things," O'Brian says. Two weeks later after returning to Los Angeles he founded the Hugh O'Brian Youth Foundation (HOBY).

O'Brian decided to give teenagers (high school sophomores still in their formidable years) **"a forum in which they could ask questions of people who are on the firing line today in business, government, education, and the professions.**

**So they can find out how they can be a part of it."**

For nine years, from 1958 to 1967, the seminars were held in Los Angeles for California high school sophomores.

In 1977, in an effort to include students across the country, three-day statewide HOBY Leadership Seminars were started in order to allow high schools throughout the country to send their chosen sophomore to a leadership seminar in their home state. Today over 14,000 high schools annually select their most outstanding 10th grader to attend HOBY leadership seminars each spring.

In 1991, HOBY added one-day Community Leadership Workshops (CLEWs), which have become very popular because they allow schools and business people within a local community to run their own program. Today, HOBY presents nearly 90 Leadership Seminars across North America each year.

One young man and woman is selected from each of the Leadership Seminars to attend the all-expense-paid, eight-day World Leadership Conference allowing students from more than 62 countries around the world to attend.

The programs themselves are formidable. Community experts using keynotes and panels give seminar attendees the opportunity to question both sides of an issue during fiery debates, rethink established philosophies and standards, take tests on topics such as using personal skills, ask presenters tough questions relating to their own roles in American business and leadership, and share a "power lunch" with career professionals.

HOBY challenges participants, called Ambassadors, to think for themselves and to become critical thinkers, to enhance their leadership skills through active involvement in their communities, and to practice what they learn about the American democratic process and free enterprise system.

Statistics show a high level of success in reaching these goals. Results from a survey of HOBY volunteers and alumni showed that 99 percent believed that they could make a difference in their communities, and 98 percent reported that as a result of HOBY, they now know what steps to take to be a better leader.

Because of the outstanding effort of volunteers and contributors, the seminars have remained free of charge to participants since their beginning in 1958, thus allowing the greatest opportunity for youth from all levels of society to participate. Over 1,000,000 hours are invested by 5,200 HOBY volunteers each year.

Volunteers are vital to HOBY's success. All HOBY programs are conducted without cost to schools, parents or students — without "one single penny" from any government source. HOBY is considered one of the greatest examples of the private sector initiative, O'Brian emphasizes, "and I'm very proud of that."

As such, all HOBY leaders, are dedicated corporate and individual volunteers who have accepted the HOBY challenge to provide interactive opportunities for youth to learn and to positively promote democracy and the free enterprise

system through their participation in HOBY.

The charismatic personality of O'Brian, and his total dedication to HOBY, have influenced the giving and volunteer efforts of thousands over the past forty-two years, including some well-known personalities such as former Joint Chiefs Chairman General Colin Powell, astronaut Buzz Aldrin, singer Mary Chapin Carpenter, tennis pro Chris Evert and Steven M. R. Covey, Executive Vice President of Franklin Covey Company.

In addition, HOBY World Leadership Congress ambassadors have heard addresses by such notables as President Gerald Ford, Muhammad Ali, Mikhail Gorbachev, and astronaut John Glenn.

Oz Nelson, retired Chairman and CEO of United Parcel Service in Atlanta, says of HOBY, "Who would have dreamed that Hugh's idea would grow to become a nationwide program providing positive motivation for so many teenagers? Who, of course, but Hugh!"

"With the US facing intensified competition in global markets and the growing specter of shortages in skilled labor and other critical resources, programs such as HOBY become especially vital," said Norman R. Augustine, former Chairman and CEO, Lockheed Martin Corp., Bethesda, Maryland. "By challenging young people to excel and by cultivating a balanced appreciation of the free enterprise system, HOBY develops the leaders of tomorrow and ensures that they will understand they have the power to shape not only their individual destinies, but their world."

Many HOBY alumni later become volunteers. Having attended a Leadership or CLEW seminar, they recognize the importance of sharing the message and influence of HOBY with other teens. "HOBY helped me to be a better leader, communicator and motivator," says Steve May, an Arizona State Representative, and a 1977 HOBY alumnus. "It taught me to be willing to accept life's challenges, to take calculated risks and to strive for success in every endeavor."

Other well-known HOBY alumni include Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, actor James Van Der Beek of the popular TV series *Dawson's Creek*, and 1999 United Way Volunteer of the Year Rachelle Strawther.

"HOBY is fantastic," said Skip Humphrey, Minnesota Attorney General. "Hugh O'Brian is a real hero. The whole effort to establish leadership among our young people is terribly important."

Paul Greeley, President of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) has also offered strong support to HOBY this year. In an effort to increase the participation of local Chamber of Commerce executives across the nation, Greeley wrote each ACCE leader a personal letter and encouraged them

to get involved with HOBY by offering not only their financial support, but their time, as well.

In addition to the multitude of volunteer hours donated to HOBY each year, hundreds of large and small corporations across the country contribute financial assistance and gifts-in-kind on behalf of HOBY.

"J.C. Penney likes to support programs that will help make students successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace as well as become responsible citizens in a democratic society," explains Gail Duff-Bloom, President of Company Communications and Corporate Image at Penney's, one of many HOBY corporate sponsors. "We consider our contribution to HOBY a sound investment."

Approximately twenty organizations such as America's Promise for Youth, the American Association of School Administrators, Junior Achievement, the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, The General Federation of Women's Clubs, Kiwanis International and the National Association of Secondary School Principals among others, also recognize HOBY as one of the country's foremost youth leadership programs and have expressed their desire to help our countries' youth develop strong leadership skills through their national endorsements of HOBY.

You don't have to be famous or well known to be a part of HOBY, however. The real heroes are the volunteers at the local level. There, volunteers and contributors from hundreds of cities and towns across the United States enable HOBY to continue to provide quality services to teens across the world.

Dr. Tim Thurston, a pediatrician from Alcoa, Tennessee and his wife, Pat, are two such volunteers. For several years, one or both of the Thurston's have traveled the eighty-six miles from their home to Chattanooga, Tennessee to participate in their state's Leadership Seminar. There, Mrs. Thurston serves as a group facilitator while Dr. Thurston acts as one of several judges who elect ambassadors to attend the WLC, in addition to speaking as a medical professional, as needed.

"I've learned that there are a lot of kids who have leadership qualities and who are willing to express these qualities to others on a person-to-person basis," notes Dr. Thurston. "They want to emulate the leaders, learn from them, plus have the opportunity to show others what they have gained by their experience. **They learn to get others to follow them, rather than following others.**"

Ask nearly any HOBY volunteer why he or she continues to return to HOBY Seminars year after year and you'll hear, "because of the students."

"It's their enthusiasm, their excitement," says Dana Gold, HOBY West Texas.

"They're polite, they ask intelligent questions, they grasp answers and the information given them. Not only do the students *participate* — a major achievement with 250 teenagers — but they *think*." Gold is not the only one impressed by the teens.

Joan Beaver, HOBY Tennessee says, "If these young people were causing trouble, they would be getting all kinds of publicity, but they're good kids, so no one hears about them." Beaver adds, "They come here, rarely knowing anyone else, afraid they're the 'only one in the world'... and they find validation. They bloom. And it's amazing how quickly they mesh with each other." Students also mesh with their leaders, some corresponding long after the Seminar has ended and everyone has returned home. That's what makes it worthwhile. That's what keeps the volunteers coming back. Not only have these volunteers made a strong impact in the lives of HOBY ambassadors, but they, too, have gained enormously through their participation.

For HOBY to continue to thrive and to educate our youth to be the leaders of tomorrow, local business owners and executives must continue to support the program founded by Hugh O'Brian those 42 years ago.

You may ask yourself the same question Dr. Albert Schweitzer asked of O'Brian as he prepared to board the plane that would return him to life as he knew it in 1958 Los Angeles, "***What are you going to do with this?***"