

Kaitlyn Olson, A Young Girl That's Making A Difference

Most of us spent our teenage years doing what our friends told us to do. It wasn't until much later in life that we actually started thinking about causes we felt were worth fighting for. Which is why Kaitlyn Olson's story is so amazing.

She's only a junior in high school, which would put her right around 17 years old, and yet already she's won more awards and received more recognition for her social awareness than most of us ever will. She lives in Pacific Palisades, attending New Roads High School, where recently she co-produced a charity benefit at the Knitting Factory called "Share The Love". The day's schedule included six bands from Westside schools and some free speech poets from South Central. Together they raised over \$6000 for One Global Tribe, a network of youth around the world fighting for AIDS prevention, war affected children, lack of clean water worldwide and other worthwhile causes. The event was featured on Fox and in Teen Vogue.

As Executive Director and Founder of the Youth Division of One Global Tribe, Kaitlyn has made AIDS prevention one of her personal priorities. Last month her group joined with PEP LA to organize an event where students lying down in the park formed the symbol for AIDS and spelled out the word "HOPE". An aerial picture of the group was then taken. Kaitlyn joined several other students at the event to speak on why they cared and wanted to help students affected by AIDS. But this wasn't the first time Kaitlyn was involved in this kind of effort. Back in October of 2004 when she would have been around 15, Robert Kennedy Jr. led a group of 1000 youths down the streets of Boulder, CO, just before the presidential election, to a high school field where they all laid down in the image of a tipping scale, saying, "November 2nd, We Decide. Are we going to choose \$\$ or the Earth?" It was a design created by Kaitlyn.

Her involvement in One Global Tribe started when she heard Amy Eldon, Founder and Executive Director of One Global Tribe at her school talking about the problems going on in Africa. "I had no idea that this was going on," she explains, "It was tantamount to the situation in Darfur. Since we really don't learn about this in history, I decided to independently research the situation in Uganda." As she did, she discovered violence and misery most of us are completely unaware of. She decided to try and raise money to help the situation. She also felt compelled to become a spokesperson for the cause. That's how she got involved with the Name Campaign, a program that sells dog tags with the names of Ugandan children. Proceeds from the sales go to help rehabilitate Uganda. Earlier this year she also participated in The Youth Intelligence Panel at Fox Studios, where a group of teens were invited to discuss trends and issues they felt were important. Last summer Kaitlyn was invited to be a part of the Global Awareness in Action youth panel, a group that spent 4 days discussing world issues before leaving for a trip to San Salvador where they got to see for themselves what really was going on in third world countries. When they returned, several of the students, including Kaitlyn, were invited to speak about their findings to a panel

at

Yale

University.

This coming September 13 – 16 Kaitlyn will lead a delegation of US teens to Nairobi, Kenya to be a part of The Youth Employment Summit (www.yesweb.org). She will present talks representing some of the theories of One Global Tribe on how youth (18-35) can find jobs and careers. Recently awarded with a Prudential “Spirit of Community” award for her social consciousness and advocacy, Kaitlyn is scheduled to do two internships this summer in Washington, DC. The first one will be with Hillary Clinton and then one with Media Matters, a group she describes as “one of the few reliable media sources”. The month of July is scheduled at The Center for American Progress.

The granddaughter of Culbert L. Olson who served as Governor of the State of California back in the late 30's, Kaitlyn herself isn't currently interested in a career in politics. “I think now, time is better spent focusing on campaigns and a call to action for large corporations and private sector to take responsibility and finance grass root activists and programs, to develop new policies that must be implemented here in the US and globally to effect lasting change and uphold a sustainable future.” She doesn't rule out the possibility that her political ambitions might not change 10 or 20 years from now. After graduation, Kaitlyn hopes to attend Barnard College or Columbia University.
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