



CHALLENGE

June 2006

A Herff Jones IMPACT Resource for Students

Making the Most of Summer

Summer—just the word calls up thoughts of sun-drenched days, lots of free time, and no homework. This summer, instead of spending all your free time hanging out at the pool, why not challenge yourself with your own personal improvement plan? With two to three months to focus on creating a better you, you could accomplish some serious goals by September.

Start by taking stock of where you are in achieving your personal goals. Use the diagram on page 2 of this newsletter to help you assess where you are in the various aspects of your life. If the inner circle is a 1 and the outer rim of the wheel is a 10, where would you rate yourself on achieving your social, financial, family, educational, physical, spiritual, and other goals? For any areas in which you rate yourself lower than a 5, consider setting a goal this summer to improve that area.

On a purely personal level, it's also a good idea to spend some time in the summer developing your interests and refreshing your spirit. Devote some time to starting or continuing a hobby. Read some books. Play a game. Get some exercise. Visit with friends and

family—do all the things you seldom have time for during the school year. You'll find yourself returning to school in the fall refreshed and ready for a new school year.

Check out the following for ideas about where to start.

Feed your mind.

You probably get enough of hard-core academics during the school year, so how about doing some reading just for fun? These websites can help you find good summer reading.

• For Teens, by

Teens: Recommended Reading List (www.justreadflorida.com/recommend/PublicDisplay.asp) is an alphabetical listing of recommended books by teens showing how many people recommend it and what their rating is on a scale of 1 to 5 stars.

• Teenreads (www.teenreads.com) brings teens information and features about their favorite authors, books, series, and characters. The site bills itself as “the place online for teens to talk about their fave books—and find the hippest new titles!”

Volunteer your service.

- Youth Service America's website (www.ysa.org) has a variety of information on youth service, with an especially helpful feature that enables visitors to type in their Zip code and find service opportunities in their local community.
- VolunteerMatch (www.volunteermatch.org) also allows visitors to conduct an online search for nearby service opportunities.
- Do Something (www.dosomething.org) features online polls, chat rooms, and in-depth information on specific issues designed to inspire, support, and celebrate the ability of young people to change the world.

Focus on fitness.

Get rid of junk food. Develop an exercise plan. Drink more water. For ideas on healthy activities check out these websites:

- Verb: It's What You Do (www.verbnow.com) features fun stuff—including a game generator—to promote active lifestyles.
- If strengthening your cardiovascular system, toning and stretching your muscles, and improving your mental fitness are among your goals, check out Yoga for Teens (http://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/exercise/yoga.html).



- The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports website (www.fitness.gov) features health, physical activity, fitness, and sports information.
- To find out how you can start a physical activity program today and stay active and fit for life while earning Presidential awards, visit www.presidentschallenge.org.

Make some money.

If you don't have a summer job yet, check out these sites:

- Summer and seasonal jobs for teens, with links to several good resources: www.quintcareers.com/summer_job_sites.html
- For a good article on how to

find a summer job or internship that you really want, visit www.trincoll.edu/depts/career/guides/summer_job.shtml

- Teens4Hire (www.teens4hire.org) features an online career center for employers and teens in the college and high school age group.

Look to the future.

Whatever your interests, you'll find yourself much more ready to tackle whatever comes your way in the fall if you take a break from your normal routines over the summer. In addition to being a more interesting person by the end of summer, employers and colleges look for well-rounded individuals, so you'll be doing

yourself a favor in the long run as well.

When applying for colleges, scholarships, or jobs, you need to be able to demonstrate on an application why you stand out from all the other applicants. How do you look on paper? If your grades are great but there's not much going on elsewhere, what can you do to improve in the activities, service, or leadership areas? Strive for a balanced presentation that really shows who you are and what you are interested in and reveals you as more than a one-dimensional student.

Focus on making the most of this summer—but don't forget to relax and have some fun, too!

Hub of Wheel Directions:

Review your goals in each of the areas listed on the spokes of the wheel. (There is one blank for you to fill in your own area, if desired.) If 10 is the ultimate achievement of your goal—the best you could possibly be—where are you right now in achieving your goals? Consider developing a summer plan to help you achieve your goals in any areas ranked lower than 5.

