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“The Matrix is everywhere...it is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.” In The Matrix, Morpheus offers Neo a choice. The Blue Pill—blissful ignorance. Status quo. Normality. Or, the Red Pill—a journey to freedom. Knowledge. Discovery.

The day that I landed at the Harvest Festival, I was a shy eighth grader from a small city outside Seattle. When a friend invited me to the Festival, a one-day community service event giving supplies to those experiencing poverty or homelessness, I said yes. Walking through the doors to the event revealed a scene I wasn't expecting—there were swarms of people of all ages and ethnicities, and hundreds of volunteers were giving out supplies. A positive energy seemed to radiate from both the volunteers and people being served. I remember, after first being timid, slowly stepping outside of my comfort zone and helping serve guests. I greeted at the entrance, played mini-golf with some children, and helped clients shop for clothing items.

I remember walking away from the event with thoughts and emotions racing through my head. Something inside of me was stirred—something that made me crave those emotions from the Festival. For me, there was something special about bringing happiness to another human.

Six months later, the non-profit that ran the Harvest Festival announced they would be moving out of town. While I'd never planned any type of community event before, I contacted the organization and volunteered to organize the festival the following year. There was concern surrounding my proposition from the community—after all, I was just an eighth grader. However, the organization gave me permission to try. I was motivated by the idea of making a difference.

I've taken what simply started as a community event and grown it into a nonprofit serving people locally and globally. Since 2015, I've rebranded the event as The Hope Festival and run four festivals, serving more than 5,500 individuals in need with life necessities and hope. In the Purpose Challenge, I labeled “helping others is very important to me” as “exactly like me”. The Challenge then asks how I'd use a magic wand to continue living out this purpose—but I believe that first steps start small. My service is just the beginning of the much greater impact I will have.

As I look back on these past four years and consider the origin of my conviction, I think back to that first day I volunteered at the Harvest Festival and the work I've done since. This work has given me a sense of purpose for my life. My purpose is to live as a servant leader, and my ultimate goal is to create a sustainable solution to a modern-day issue like hunger, poverty, or homelessness. I believe that each of us has a duty—a responsibility—to serve the world. I believe that those of us who are fortunate enough to be born in a loving family, with food on the table and a roof above our heads, have a responsibility to improve the world. My purpose was born from seeing pain and suffering first-hand.

One way I plan to achieve my goals is to start and grow a new nonprofit organization that can have a greater impact. Steps that I've already begun taking include getting into a college with a great business program and working to earn enough scholarship money to do so. A goal of mine for the next four years is to focus on my academics and excel in college, as well as use my education, service and leadership experience to earn an internship. Future steps include being mentored by business leaders and recruiting people to join my nonprofit team. For most of my life, it was always the blue pill. Since I discovered my purpose, I've spit that pill out and swallowed the red one.