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What drives you?

Like every teenager, I eagerly anticipated earning my driver's license. The first time I drove, I relished in the quiet hum of the motor and the feeling of the steering wheel. This small sense of freedom is something I cherish. However, as I have learned through my involvement in an organization called Backyard Broadcast, freedom is something that many people do not have. Millions of people have been stripped of their basic human rights due to the horrors of human trafficking. What drives me is my passion for eliminating trafficking to make my community a safer place.

I was introduced to the trafficking crisis when I met a representative for Backyard Broadcast my freshman year. While familiar with the term, I had not grasped the extent to which this issue plagues our society. Upon further research, I was shocked to learn that it is modern day slavery and is more extensive now than during the transatlantic slave trade. Even more disturbing is the fact that it takes place in our Utah community.

The fact that this evil practice still exists in modern society drove me to take action. This is why I started a Backyard Broadcast chapter at my school. This organization is a teen-run movement to educate our community about trafficking and how to prevent it. Serving as the chapter President for the past three years, I have worked to bring awareness of this issue to my peers. Our main goal is education, so during meetings we teach students how to recognize signs of trafficking and protect themselves from traffickers. My invitations to guest speakers for our meetings have brought in doctors, legislators, and police officers of the UTIP (Utah Trafficking in Persons) Task Force, all of whom possess expertise on the trafficking crisis in Utah. We work especially closely with law enforcement to remove the stigma against trafficking victims.

The support my school's chapter has received from the UTIP Task Force has helped me to realize the importance of collaboration. By engaging with chapter leaders from other schools, we have organized projects such as educational youth summits, fundraising events, and podcasts. I have also co-hosted several panel discussions for the Annual Human Trafficking Symposium held by the University of Utah S.J. Quinney School of Law. These discussions consist of experts from multiple professions who work together to find a comprehensive solution to trafficking.

As I continue my formal education in college next year, my passion for advocating for victims of trafficking will continue to motivate me. I intend to major in Human Biology, a field of study which integrates the social and physical sciences, in order to pursue a career in developing anti-trafficking and human rights policy. I am not sure what lies for me in the road ahead, but I do know what drives me. I am grateful for the opportunity that Jiffy Lube provides to support students like me in achieving our goals.