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# Make It Bright Foundation

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Imagine yourself at the age of four or five; picture your biggest worries, your biggest fears. Did these emotions even exist? Would you ever have considered yourself a “survivor” as a toddler? One Colombian boy I interviewed has answered these questions, and surprisingly, he answered yes. Yes, he had substantial worries and fears. Yes, he always has been a survivor. By the time he was a toddler, Andres began to evolve into become the person he is today. He had no other choice. He has gone through battles that most people do not encounter throughout their entire lifetime. Andres is a survivor; Andres is an inspiration; Andres is a sixteen year old superman.

My conversations with Andres in December of 2011 were the pinnacle moments of my honors project. They instantly brought everything to life. Days before meeting Andres, I had already visited the San Mauricio orphanage in Bogota, Colombia, explored the country’s capital, and started to envision the Make It Bright organization with my faculty advisor, Kim White. However, this initial meeting with Andres impacted my outlook on the focus of the Make It Bright organization. Through my discussions with Andres, I was able to hear firsthand what Make It Bright’s purpose was and the potential it held for the future. I sat down that night, listening to a young boy articulate his story with the integrity and clarity of a grown man, and my perspective on life changed drastically.

My honors project focused on co-creating an organization called Make It Bright. This organization directly supports the children of the San Mauricio Orphanage in Bogota, Colombia. The purpose of this project was to bridge the gap between loss, service and the University of Rhode Island community. This was partially achieved by connecting students and faculty to Make It Bright by way of donations, time, and well spent energy. My trip to Colombia also played a large role. The connection between the students and the organization was reinforced in my advisor’s classrooms, where I participated in a mentor capacity in the service components of the courses. In February of 2012 I established Make It Bright as a recognized student senate organization on campus. As a result of this rewarding experience, I have acquired the skills necessary for taking part in a non-profit (5013C) organization, while polishing my organization and communication skills.

My project also focused on gaining clinical experience by meeting with the orphanage’s director/founder and psychologist. They facilitated my understanding of the process that children that come to San Mauricio, go through as well as what their work consists of. They were able to talk with me about Andres and his progression from when he entered the orphanage to the time he left as a result of adoption. I then had the opportunity to interact and interview Andres by myself. It was this pivotal experience that made me push forward to do the best I could for this project. Andres wanted his story to be written and I promised to do that for him. After learning about his incredible life, I not only wrote Andres’ journey but I applied it with my firsthand experience and research. I composed a paper discussing the losses specifically related to children losing parents and the process of grieving the child subsequently goes through.

I am hopeful that this project will not end after I graduate. I plan to continue to work with Make It Bright as an alumnus. I hope to connect with the new leaders of the group in a mentor capacity; as well as to chaperone the pending alternative spring break/class trip to San Mauricio in 2013 taught by my advisor. I will continue to work towards keeping both the relationship of loss and service alive and well at URI.