WORLD WATCH

York Street ULTIMATE March Break Camp gathered outside York Street Public School.

Learning how to make balloon animals on carnival day.

Kids playing at the March Break Camp.

Fahd with fellow Top 20 Under 20 winners in 2013.

Lessons in Leadership

Fahd Alhattab became interested in helping his community after getting involved with the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGCO) when he was seven years old. Since then, Fahd has been recognized as a youth leader by national organizations. *Fahd*-tastic! What's Fahd's secret to making a difference? OWL talked to him to find out.

FAHD'S BIO

Fahd co-initiated the York Street ULTIMATE March Break Camp. This week-long camp is for low-income, visible minority children between the ages of 6 and 12 who reside in Lowertown, Ottawa. Under his leadership, the team was able to raise $19,000 for the camp over its first three years of operation. The camp provided over 100 kids with a camp experience at no cost. For his efforts, Fahd was recognized with a United Way Community Builder Award and was named one of Canada's Top 20 Under 20 by the Youth in Motion organization.

OWL: How did you get involved with helping children?

Fahd: My family moved to Canada from Kuwait in 1998. When we first started out here, I was considered an at-risk child because we lived in a fairly rough community, we were a low-income household, and we had a big family, with six kids. I was lucky enough to live only ten minutes away from a Boys and Girls Club in Ottawa. The club was a community centre with a gym, pool, and art centre, and it had fun activities to do. The club taught me how to be part of the community and how to give back. I eventually joined the youth council and did things like help out with the Christmas and Halloween parties. The club became an integral part of who I was. It inspired me to coach soccer and run a number of youth council projects.

OWL: How did you raise $19,000?

Fahd: I was lucky enough to be able to learn about fundraising from the Boys and Girls Club and Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO). When I was 14 years old, I joined a leadership program. Someone there told me I had great natural leadership ability, so I was invited to sit on the board of directors. My experience through those organizations helped me understand fundraising. In grade 12, I went to visit my old public school. After that visit, my friend Muhammad Zaman and I brainstormed, and we decided to run a March break camp. There were no funds available, and the community seemed taken aback at first that we were determined to do this. We managed to raise a lot of money from companies, and camp staffers were entirely volunteer. We were able to provide an awesome camp experience to one of the lowest-income communities in Ottawa.

OWL: What does it take to be a leader?

Fahd: Leadership is bigger than ourselves. Most people don't identify themselves as leaders, but everyday things can make a difference. The biggest leaders I've had in my life saw something they wanted to change and went and did something about it. So the secret is simple: identify a problem and do something about it. Don't get discouraged about how big the problem is — have faith in your actions as a leader.

OWL: What are your plans for the future?

Fahd: I'm currently studying political science and economics at Carleton University. I'm really interested in politics for the community—basically, politics with a purpose. My family struggled when we first came to Canada, and now we consider ourselves fairly successful. I want to help new families come to Canada and to make it easier for people who are struggling.

Do you know a leader in your community? Email and tell us at owl@owlkids.com.