



A Prepared Speech for Project HOPE

Good morning! My name is James Kashork and I'm here to give you Project HOPE... Spokane.

As the executive director of the non-profit youth development organization Project HOPE... I see the impact we have on the West Central and Emerson Garfield neighborhoods of Spokane daily. I am driven to share Project HOPE's story where ever I go, and I'm very glad to have a willing audience today.

Following two tragic incidents in West Central Spokane, the neighborhood came together with a question for their community leaders, "With these kinds of tragedies playing-out before the eyes of our youth, how can we instill in them the values we cherish and expectations for futures filled with hope?"

Project HOPE Spokane is born to this calling.

With the neighborhood ready for change, youth needed alternatives to poor choices, and too much time in idle hands and on unchallenged minds. Planning began in 2004 and shovels hit the dirt in 2005. Project HOPE provides guidance for three programs, Riverfront Farms, West Central Lawn Care and West Central Marketplace. All of these programs offer approximately twenty to thirty youth, ages eleven to eighteen development opportunities.

"Green Collar Jobs" became the order of the day with youth hired as community assets to urban gardening in the local neighborhood. The urban gardening project became known locally as Riverfront Farms, and operations begin in the spring with crews of youth opening the beds, through summer maintenance and harvest, to the fall where the youth prepare the beds for winter and the following year.

It is no coincidence that the youth also grow in the gardens they tend. Lessons abound from the garden's bounty. As our youth nurture their green charges, nature teaches our youth the importance of responsibility. The day's dawn brings bodies sore from yesterday's hard work, but curious minds are eager to see the progress of growing green things. Growing friendships built in shared hard work, create bonds of trust not easily found elsewhere.

To provide an outlet for the produce and hungry minds of our youth, Project HOPE organized West Central Marketplace - a community farmers market - to sell, the freshly grown food to a neighborhood hungry for fresh produce. See, West Central Spokane is a USDA-designated

food desert and the neighborhood welcomes access to fresh produce, a commodity not found inside the community. West Central Marketplace provides youth with all phases of retail management. Operating as vendors the youth assist in the development of new recruits, organize marketing strategies, and manage the bookkeeping chores any retail business encounters. In these ways our youth develop practical workplace skills and build résumés for future employment.

As managers our youth also see how businesses function from the customer service side of the counter. As we all know, until a person experiences the management side of business, misunderstandings about how business truly is done arise. Operating a business is a lot more than just opening the doors and letting customers come to you, West Central Marketplace pushes our youth to understand these complex retail relationships and grow as individuals with eyes open to expanded horizons.

At Project HOPE, we knew the neighborhood had need for more youth opportunities. We started West Central Lawn Care to fill this void and at the same time we hoped our youth could see the value of their efforts in beautifying their neighbor's properties. At Project HOPE we strive to show the community the assets our local youth can become. As our youth work to trim and mow their way through the area, helping the elderly and low-income neighbors, our youth can take pride in seeing the results of their hard efforts. A lawn that was once a bit too long no longer appears neglected, and the good feelings of a job well done, displayed in a well-tended neighborhood helps to create welcome moments of satisfaction for all our youth.

For most of the youth in West Central Spokane, access to opportunity comes few and far between. Knowing where to go is part of the issue, and Project HOPE offers alternatives to poor choices and idle time. As spring ends we open the recruitment rolls to our community youth. With tryouts scheduled – both the youth and what Project HOPE offers to them is onstage. With fifty to sixty youth ranging from eleven to eighteen anxious to find opportunity, Project HOPE demonstrates what they can expect in a work day. As they try us out, we try them out. Some find they are not ready for the hard work we require of our youth and that's okay, maybe next year.

At the end of tryouts it's with heavy hearts we have to cut down the aspirations of some of our neighborhood's youthful assets. Every year we hold tryouts for approximately fifty to sixty youth, knowing we will only be able to keep about half of those who attend the first day. This is the hardest part of my job, telling a worthy applicant we cannot afford to offer them something they may desperately need, the hope of an opportunity. But, funding only goes so far and our hope is to find a way to increase the opportunities in our neighborhood. We wish we had jobs for all those in need in our community, for every youth turned away – the life alternatives for that youth may be few. With increased funding we feel the demand for

opportunity within our community could be even higher than we know. As it stands now, most of the neighborhood knows that while we wish to offer more jobs, our funding limits the numbers of youth we can serve. With better funding and more opportunities available, it's quite possible Project HOPE could grow even larger than we can currently envision. My hope for today is that you will feel compelled to tell those within your social circles about the opportunities Project HOPE is growing. With a little help from all of Spokane's citizens, Project HOPE can help grow our most precious assets our youth.

In the end, Project HOPE is well known in the communities we serve. Our hope is to raise awareness throughout the greater Spokane region. With greater awareness we hope to spread our funding base over a larger area. All of Project HOPE's efforts focus on our youth and the development projects we offer. Project HOPE Spokane offers development opportunities to our greatest assets, our youth – opportunity is hope.