

Madelyn Nelson

iB Alum (Coshocton High School, Coshocton, OH)
Former Volunteer Staff Team Member

I have a difficult time putting into words how the iBELIEVE Foundation has shaped me as a person and a leader. Since 2016, I have grown into a different person because of the positivity, confidence and leadership skills instilled in me through iBELIEVE. From being a nervous first-time student at workshop, to staffing for three weeks of my summer, it is hard to imagine how different my life would be without iBELIEVE.

Since being involved with iBELIEVE, the biggest change in me was the shift toward a positive mindset. I heard a quote during my third year of workshop and it has become my quote to live by, "The grass isn't greener on the other side, its greener where you water it." It opened my eyes to see that circumstances don't define you, but your effort and attitude do. I learned that I can choose to invest into my circumstances to create something beautiful. I don't need to leave or change - I need to water the seeds I'm already standing on.

The friends I have met through iBELIEVE are my lifelong friends. They are the people that I share goals and connections with, and the ones I grew through the iBELIEVE program with. Although I don't see them every day, I know they're in my corner. I love cheering them on and seeing all the good they're putting into the world. The people have made a significant impact on my life and demonstrated intentionality and thoughtfulness through the years.

I chose where to attend college because of a staff member I met at iBELIEVE. Katie Exline was a role model to me and I admired her genuine personality and work ethic. I learned so much from her at workshop and wanted to be a strong and confident leader like her. I knew Katie attended Otterbein University, so I decided to check it out when applying to college. Now, I am a sophomore at Otterbein because of the positive influence from Katie - a choice that will shape the rest of my life.

Although iBELIEVE Summer Workshop may seem like silly games, skits, and chants on the outside, the curriculum is so intentional by teaching students critical life lessons. Even now, I can look back and appreciate how much I learned at workshop. I learned how to communicate with peers and adults, believe in my abilities and show my true colors. I am eternally grateful for the opportunities I have had through the iBELIEVE Foundation and I look forward to giving back to students just like me. Experiencing the magic of workshop was life-changing, but sharing it with others is even better.

October 20, 2020