

SSYA LEADERSHIP CAMP HAS BEEN A TURNING POINT IN HIS LIFE

STARTTS, SSYA

NSW SERVICE FOR THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA SURVIVORS, SOUTH SUDANESE YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The South Sudanese Youth Ambassador Program (SSYA) helps young people increase their mental health literacy, social connections and wellbeing. The program provides ongoing support to a pool of peer support leaders and runs a residential camp bringing groups together to share ideas, information and training.

The following story is in the words of an SSYA Coordinator.

Tohan* was a bright and ambitious young man that had just finished high school, but he had lost touch with his cultural roots and didn't have any friends from his own background. He felt disconnected and lost in the fast-paced city life, longing for a sense of belonging and purpose.

Last year, I met him at soccer and asked him to attend SSYA Leadership Camp, a program aimed at empowering young South Sudanese individuals to become leaders in their communities and promote mental health

awareness. Intrigued, Tohan decided to take a leap of faith and enrol in the camp.

At the camp, Tohan was welcomed with open arms by fellow South Sudanese youth who shared similar experiences and challenges. He was also exposed to various leadership skills, including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, through interactive workshops and activities.

Tohan quickly made friends with his peers, bonding over their shared backgrounds and experiences. He felt a sense of camaraderie and community that he had been missing for so long. He participated enthusiastically in all the SSYA activities and discovered a newfound passion for advocating for the needs of his community, especially through filming.

As the camp came to an end, Tohan was transformed. He had regained his cultural identity and was filled with confidence and determination. He decided to take his newfound leadership skills and use them to make a positive impact in his community. He decided to film and interview all the participants about their experience in the camp and the importance of the SSYA project.

With the support of SSYA, Tohan became an active participant in various SSYA activities and initiatives. He now regularly shoots sports

videos of fellow South Sudanese. He feels that's the best way for him to use his own talents of filming and promote the next crop of talented South Sudanese athletes to the world.

Tohan's passion for filming and commitment to his culture and community grew stronger because of the SSYA. He continued to actively participate in SSYA activities and encouraged other South Sudanese youth to join the program and benefit from its empowering opportunities.

Tohan looks back on his journey with gratitude. The SSYA Leadership Camp had been a turning point in his life, helping him connect with his cultural roots, find a sense of belonging, and become a leader in his community. He was proud of the positive impact he had made and was excited about the bright future ahead, knowing that SSYA had equipped him with the skills and confidence to overcome any challenge that came his way.

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