



# REAL LIFE

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## VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

Cecile Andrews/Special to The Seattle Times

# 2 programs for teens that can change lives

Summer is now officially here, and teenagers are looking for summer jobs. Will this really be the best use of their time?



I hate to even think about my teenage summer jobs. They were such a waste, so boring and mind-deadening. A couple of summers I baby-sat. The hours dragged by as the kids watched TV and I read long books, like Somerset Maugham's "Of Human Bondage."

I wanted something different — something exciting. I decided to pick strawberries. It lasted one day. I had to get up way too early, pile in a

truck with a bunch of other kids and spend a day in the rain bending over looking for berries — getting wet, stiff and losing my glasses.

Maybe there were meaningful work opportunities around, but I didn't know about them. So each summer went by, as boring as the last one.

But there seem to be more exciting possibilities for teens today — opportunities that could change lives. Here are two in particular that will capture the imagination and energy of teenagers:

One is called "The Power of Hope, the Second Annual Gathering for Teens Who Care About the World," for kids age 13 to 17, sponsored by the Whidbey Institute and the YMCA Earth Service Corps, June 28 to July 3 on Whidbey Island. The director of the course is Charlie Murphy, lead singer and composer for the band Rumors of the Big Wave. Working with him will be a staff of artists, naturalists and activists. There will be hiking, swimming, music, dancing and training to learn to use a mini-recording studio and video equipment.

An experience like this could ignite young people's desire to commit to something larger than themselves, helping them find ways to contribute to a positive future. Teenagers want to be involved in something they really care about, and when they find it, they can more easily avoid lives of addiction — whether to drugs or consumerism. For a brochure, call 800-733-YESSC or 206-382-5013, ext. 2313.

Another project that kids — and the rest of us — should know about is called "Free Ride Zone, The Community Bicycle Project of Seattle." The mission is "to build sustainable communities by educating youth and promoting bicycling."

Kids from age 8 to 18 learn to repair donated bikes, and in the process, earn their own bicycles. Young adults from 16 to 20 will learn to run a neighborhood bicycle repair shop. Yes, they will learn vocational skills that will allow them to earn money, but more important they will gain leadership skills by developing a program to benefit their Southeast Seattle community.

Kids will repair used bicycles and sell them at affordable prices to low income residents. The bikes will also

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be available free for community use — residents can check them out from a "bicycle library." For information, call 206-726-9380.

I'd say these are two programs that will do a lot more for kids than baby-sitting or picking strawberries or whatever. Not only will the kids be transformed, but ultimately, so will society.

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