

## **Morgan Alford's Gold Award: Revitalizing Taylor Park Community Center**

Morgan's gold award project focused on the lack of educational encouragement, positivity, and general public knowledge of Taylor Park. She collected donations, researched ways to promote positivity in the classroom, painted the room, downloaded new educational software on the computers, and spread the word about Taylor Park throughout the Mobile community, the nation, and the world.



We interview all Gold Award recipients, asking them to tell us more about their personal journey, to give other girls an idea of how it feels to go through the Gold Award process.

***How did you come up with your idea?*** After meeting with the teachers and the head of the community center, my heart went out to these children who had only Taylor Park as a safe place to go after school and their classroom was a place that didn't have the resources to encourage further schooling past middle and high school or promote positive living.

***Were you intimidated by the scale of the project?*** I've led and participated in more service projects than I can count, but one of this caliber was definitely intimidating.

***How did you keep up the momentum for the project?*** It was absolutely difficult to keep up with the work load of senior year of high school, graduation, and a gold award project, but whenever the work load got to the point where I considered quitting, I thought about those kids and their situation and I got motivated to continue.

***Were you ever discouraged? If so, what did you do to overcome that?*** I was definitely discouraged at points. Whenever problems would arise, I felt like the project was never going to be finished. But my passion is education for all, and when I grew up I wanted to make a difference in the world and in the lives of children. So I asked myself what defines you as 'grown up'? When you have bills, when you have kids, when you get married, when you begin your career? When? I realized I didn't have to wait for all of those things to happen before I was able to start making a difference in this world. I was starting with these kids at Taylor Park.

***Can you tell us a little story about some part of your project that was special to you?*** The most touching part of my project was at the end of the open house while I was packing up the left over water bottles, this little girl came up to me and asked if she could take some waters home since she doesn't have any water at home. I then helped her stuff her little backpack full of water bottles and she went on her way. That moment just touched me and showed how lucky I am to have all that I do, and I truly hope that my project made a positive impact in her life.

***How will people benefit from this?*** People will benefit from my project in numerous ways. The immediate impact of enhancing the room created an atmosphere where the kids could be encouraged to continue not just their school work, but to also lead a more positive life. My

project also helped to spread the word about the community center and how to get involved which will help to increase Taylor Park's volunteer sources.

***How did you feel after you finished?*** I felt extremely accomplished when I finished the project. It was a sense of relief and elation that I was done and that I actually completed something of such caliber.

***What advice would you give to other girls considering a Gold Award?*** Going for your Gold Award is definitely hard work. It's not easy, but if it was, then the award wouldn't mean anything once you earned it. During your project, you'll question yourself and ask "Is this really worth it?" and the answer is yes. You may not think so at that point, but trust me, once you complete something that actually makes a difference in your community and beyond, you'll question why you didn't do it sooner!

***Your Gold Project made a change for the better in your community. Did it change you?*** It made a change to my outlook on my own life. Seeing the problems that this poor community faced, it made my everyday problems seem like blessings. I took away leadership skills, organizational skills, and I definitely learned how to manage my time better!