

Get HOBified

Hugh O'Brian's award trains leaders

By Jamie Braun

HO•Bi•an (hō bē-an), *n.* A dedicated and enthusiastic high school sophomore who has won the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Award, otherwise known as HOBY. HOBification occurs when the sophomore attends the regional Leadership Seminar and peaks if the student is chosen to go to the World Leadership Congress. Once a HOBian, you remain one for life. Few obtain "HOBY Daddy" status. Also **HOBtastic**, **HOBtacular**, **HOBified**, *adj.*

The Original HOBY Daddy

Hugh O'Brian, a TV actor best known for his 1950s portrayal of Wyatt Earp, started HOBY in 1958. That year, he spent nine inspirational days in Africa with humanitarian Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who taught him the importance of teaching young people to think for themselves. Just two weeks after his return to Los Angeles, HOBY began.

HOBY has carried out its mission "to seek out, develop, and recognize leadership potential commencing with high school sophomores" for 44 years and has touched the lives of 285,000 participants.

The leader of the volunteer team at the World Leadership Congress is known as the "HOBY Daddy," a term coined by O'Brian himself. As patriarch of the entire HOBY family, it's only fitting that O'Brian should be known as the original HOBY Daddy.

Prep for the Real World

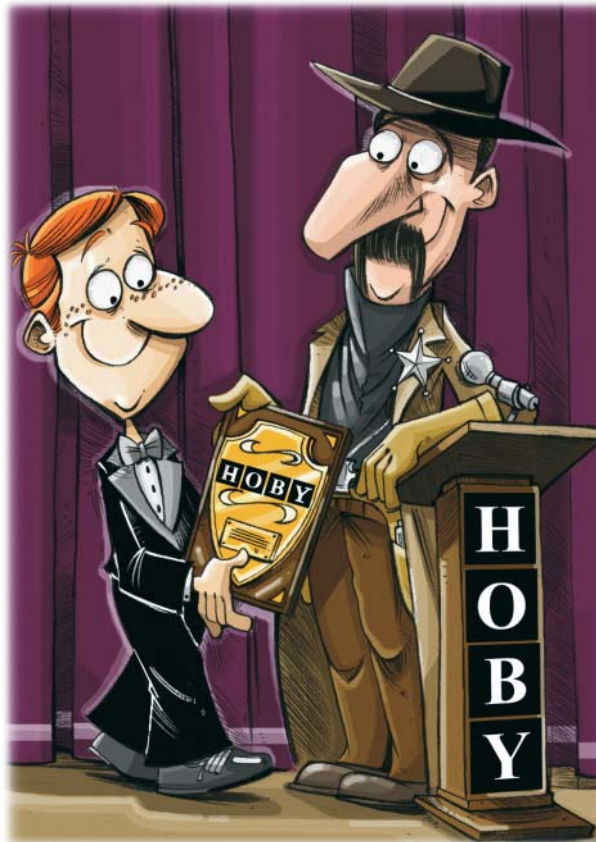
One sophomore is selected by his high school to attend a regional leadership seminar, which is designed to prepare students, known as HOBY Ambassadors, to become effective and ethical leaders. The seminar presents five themes—democratic system and entrepreneurship, education, leadership for service, media and communications, and the future of society.

The seminar teaches ambassadors that they're going to be future world leaders, and if this isn't the kind of world they want to inherit, they need to start changing things now. "For the first time at the seminar, I remember thinking, 'Rachel, you can do anything you want—you can be anything you want to be,'" says Rachel Edelsberg, a senior at **Dr. Michael Krop Senior High School** in Miami.

Kristen Williams, a junior at **St. Thomas Aquinas High School** in Fort Lauderdale, says her local seminar was amazing. "It brought me closer to my community, taught me boundless leadership qualities, and gave me the opportunity to make some great friends," she says.

Worldwide Networking

Two students represent their regional leadership seminar at the World Leadership Congress, an annual, week-long event held



in conjunction with a major U.S. university, which brings 400 HOBY Ambassadors together to explore ethical and moral questions facing today's leaders. Seventy-seven countries have been represented at the WLC since its inception in 1976.

"The WLC was the most amazing experience I've had to date," says Lindsey Champion, a junior at **Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart** in Coconut Grove. "The best part about the WLC was that I was around kids from everywhere that were trying to make a difference, that were enthusiastic about life, that really cared about people, and that were fun."

Shannon O'Donnell, a junior at **Amos P.**

Godby High School in Tallahassee, says some of the best WLC memories are when she and her new friends were just hanging out. "I think the neatest part was at the end of each day—when we were all hungry, cranky, and sleep-deprived—we could be around all of our new friends and just goof off like normal teenagers," O'Donnell says. "It was cool to see that no matter where in the world we came from, we were all the same."

WLC participants also learn about serious issues that future world leaders will have to understand. One such issue is the current political situation in the Middle East. "The boy from Lebanon stood up and said that we're the future and that we had to come together to make a difference. Then, he shook hands with the kid from Israel, and they hugged. It was incredible," Williams says.

Ambassadors learn about problems facing millions of people worldwide, such as hunger, from a unique perspective. Edelsberg says on a particularly long, tiring day, she attended an Oxford lunch, a program to aid people in developing countries. When she arrived, she found that the lunch tickets separated everyone into the three existing social classes. The lucky few assigned to the upper class were served a full-course meal by waiters. The middle class was served rice and black beans with water. The majority were assigned to the lower class and had to eat a single piece of old bread and water as they watched pictures of people from third-world countries. The participants were challenged to eat only what they were given until dinner. "Later in the day, when my stomach began to growl, I realized how sheltered I had been. I never thought about the severity of the conditions other countries faced," says Edelsberg. "As I walked around the rest of the day, HOBY showed me I could no longer be naive. I can't ever stop trying to make a difference."

Champion says the WLC experience continues to motivate her. "I feel very blessed that I got to go," Champion says. "I would just encourage any 10th graders to take advantage of this opportunity."

Life-Long Bonds

HOBY has an extremely high retention rate—most ambassadors stay involved with the program throughout high school and college, working at their local seminars or even becoming staffers at the WLC. O'Donnell says the reason people stay active in HOBY is because of the special bond all the alumni share. "HOBY is so life-changing," O'Donnell says. "At the WLC, we could look around at the people we met and know that we'd have this special bond for the rest of our lives. That's what HOBY is all about."

For more information, visit www.hoby.org.



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