

Profile Story

Paulina Colwell

Most 15-year-olds would never consider cancelling their spring break trip to Mexico to work for a week on Capitol Hill. Sam Craig, a sophomore at Chatfield Senior High in Littleton, Co, did just this.

Craig founded Jeffco Students United for Action, a student group lobbying for gun reform. He also served as the legislative director for March for Our Lives Denver and organized the walkouts that took place on March 24. At the march, Craig gave an emotional speech on the effects of gun violence in front of thousands of people. His next project, Vote for Our Lives, a nationwide group that organizes marches across the country, encourages young students to register to vote.

Craig's knowledge of statistics and politics allowed him to contribute so much to this cause. "While 90 percent of the population supports universal background checks, our politicians do not match up with our interests," said Craig. His interest in lobbying against gun violence started two months ago when news surfaced about the recent shooting.

On Feb. 14, 17 students were murdered at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. The shooting sparked high school walkouts across the nation. Craig is no stranger to school shootings. His hometown, Littleton, is the same town where the Columbine shooting took place in 1999. Parkland is number 208 on the list of school shootings since Columbine and after 19 years 122 have lost their lives.

"Even though I wasn't even alive during the shooting and it wasn't my school we still felt the effects here," said Craig. "It's shaped a lot of my policies and the way I look at things." Today he advocates for stricter gun regulations, and currently works on lobbying for a Red Flag law to prevent people in an emotional crisis from obtaining firearms. He hopes to see universal background checks across the nation.

Craig calls Twitter the student motivator. After Parkland, graphic videos from students inside the shooting started surfacing the Internet. "It was a really powerful motivator for us because we saw people like us, people in similar clothes and backpacks running out of the classroom screaming and jumping over dead bodies," said Craig. "We have PTSD from just watching the news."

Craig calls himself a passionate and determined person, who wants to promote change. Aaron Abai, one of the students who worked on organizing the local walkouts with Craig said, "he truly cares about being there for people." Abai said, "even after all of his national efforts he still found time to talk to the little people, and that shows his commitment to society. I don't think he's doing this just for fame or for a resume builder because you can tell he genuinely cares."

On top of all his efforts to stop gun violence Craig takes all honors classes, leads the photography and model U.N. club at his school, and interns at the Denver Zoo.

Jasmine Plancarte, a close high school friend of Craig's in the same grade said, "even though Sam can be serious when it comes to politics, he also is such a kind soul that can cheer you up anytime your feeling down. I still laugh every time I think about the time he managed to get two whole Spanish classes to sing the happy

birthday song in Spanish to me when I thought everyone forgot it was my birthday.” Even though Plancarte said she hasn’t seen much of him since the walkouts started, “he is still a true and genuine friend.”

Craig, like most high school students, remains hopeful for the future. His dream is to attend Stanford and major in International Relations. He hopes one day he can work for the United Nations to improve how the United States interacts with other countries. Abai said, “I think he’s going to make a great politician one day.”

Sources:

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