

# Inspiring Teens<sup>®</sup>

## The Inspiring Teen's College Application Toolkit

### How Teen Leaders Use Recognition to Stand Out — Before, During, and After the Application Process

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**A note before you begin:** This toolkit was created for teens who are ready to turn their leadership experiences into powerful college application stories. The strategies here are used by college-bound students to translate real-world experience into the language colleges, scholarship committees, and future employers are looking for.

You did the work. This is how you make sure the right people see it.

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### **PART ONE: What Colleges Are Actually Looking For**

Most teens apply to college with the same list: GPA, test scores, extracurriculars, and a personal essay. Colleges see thousands of those lists every year.

What makes an application stand out isn't more activities — it's evidence of character in action. Admissions officers are trained to look for four things beyond academics:

**Initiative** — Did this student start something, lead something, or take action without being asked?

**Impact** — Did their actions affect other people, their community, or a cause bigger than themselves?

**Resilience** — Did they face a challenge, adapt, and keep going?

**Self-awareness** — Do they understand what they learned from their experiences and why it matters?

A teen who ran a community campaign, mobilized supporters, managed a deadline, and reflected on what they learned has evidence of all four. The question is whether they know how to present it.

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## **PART TWO: Your Recognition as a Credential**

Being featured in Inspiring Teens Magazine is not just an honor — it is a documented, published, nationally distributed credential. Here is how to treat it like one.

### **On your college application activities list:**

Instead of: *"Featured in teen magazine"*

Write: *"Selected and featured in Inspiring Teens Magazine, a national publication recognizing teens of character across the United States — Issue [#], [Year]"*

That single line tells an admissions officer: this student was recognized by an external organization, not just self-nominated. It signals that someone else saw their character and put it in print.

### **On your résumé:**

Under Leadership & Recognition: *Inspiring Teens Magazine — National Feature, Issue [#] Selected from nominations nationwide for demonstrated leadership, character, and community impact. Featured in print and digital publication distributed across the United States.*

### **On scholarship applications:**

Many scholarship committees ask: *"Describe an honor or recognition you have received and what it meant to you."*

Your answer has three parts:

1. What the recognition was and how you earned it

2. What you did as part of the experience (the campaign, the community outreach, the leadership challenge)
3. What you learned about yourself and what you want to do with it

The teens who win scholarships don't just describe what happened. They connect it to who they are becoming.

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## **PART THREE: Turning Your Campaign into Résumé Language**

If you ran a community campaign as part of your Inspiring Teens experience, you did more than collect votes. Here is what you actually did — and how to say it.

### **What you did:**

- Designed and executed a multi-week community outreach campaign
- Communicated a mission to a diverse audience including family, peers, local businesses, and community organizations
- Managed deadlines, tracked progress, and adapted your strategy based on results
- Mobilized supporters across digital and in-person platforms
- Represented a national nonprofit scholarship initiative in your community

### **How to say it on a résumé or application:**

*"Designed and executed a 10-day community leadership campaign in support of a national teen scholarship fund, engaging [X] supporters across social media, local businesses, and community organizations. Developed outreach strategy, managed communications, and exceeded campaign goals."*

Fill in your real numbers. Real numbers matter.

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## **PART FOUR: Your Personal Essay Angle**

The personal essay is where most students either blend in or break through. The teens who break through tell a specific story about a specific moment — not a summary of everything they've ever done.

Your Inspiring Teens experience gives you several strong essay angles:

**The moment you asked for help.** Running a campaign means asking people to support you publicly. For many teens that's uncomfortable. If you pushed through that discomfort, that's a story about courage, humility, and growth — exactly what admissions officers want to read.

**The community response.** Did someone surprise you with their support? Did a local business say yes when you expected no? Did a grandparent share your link to people you've never met? The moment your community showed up for you is a story about relationships, trust, and what it means to earn support.

**What you learned about leadership.** The Leadership Lab reflection prompts — *I identified \_\_\_. I took action by \_\_\_. The measurable result was \_\_\_. What I learned about leadership is \_\_\_.* — are a personal essay outline waiting to happen. If you completed the Leadership Lab, you already have a draft.

**The cause behind the campaign.** If your campaign was connected to something you genuinely care about — Shriners Hospitals, a community cause, a personal mission — write about why that cause matters to you. Colleges want to know what you stand for, not just what you've done.

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## **PART FIVE: The One Sentence That Changes Everything**

After all the bullet points, résumé lines, and essay drafts, there is one sentence that ties it together. Every teen who has been through this experience should be able to say it out loud:

*"I was recognized by a national publication for my character, I ran a real leadership campaign in my community, and I documented what I learned — before I ever set foot on a college campus."*

That sentence is the difference between a teen who has a list of activities and a teen who has a story.

You have the story. Now tell it.

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## QUICK REFERENCE: Language You Can Use Today

Where	What to Write
Activities List	Selected for national feature in Inspiring Teens Magazine, Issue [#] — recognized for leadership and character
Résumé	Managed community outreach campaign supporting national teen scholarship fund; engaged [X] supporters across [platforms]
Scholarship Essay	Describe how your ITM experience connected to your values and future goals
LinkedIn	Featured teen leader, Inspiring Teens Magazine — [Issue #], [Year]
Interview Answer	"I was featured in a national magazine and ran a leadership campaign that taught me how to communicate a mission and mobilize a community."

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