Dear HOBY Ambassadors,

Thank you for allowing me to share my heart with you. I feel honored to have had the opportunity.

Shortly after the weekend, my father passed away suddenly on father's day, and so I encourage all of you to tell the people you love how much you love them. I had my moment with my father at the "Michiganian" dinner where I was honored. Don't let your moment slip away. We all need to know we are loved and can love. There is no greater gift on this earth.

I have received so many incredible letters from all of you. One particularly touched my soul and reinforced my sense of purpose in my work. I share a small excerpt with you:

"Just listening to you releases all the tension and hatred that every single teen carries around with them. And I mean that very seriously too. Very few adults understand.

... I can not thank you enough for coming to share yourself with us, especially giving every person a hug, and for listening to me say the words that you undoubtably hear in every letter you read. Most importantly though, thank you for putting your time and wisdom into youth. That means more to me than anything else in the world, or in my life."

This year, due to my work with Jim's kids, I will only honor 20 requests to come and speak at your schools. To date, 12 have been spoken for, so I urge you to contact me as soon as possible.

I believe in all of you, and hope God grants me the time on this earth to see where your lives unfold. Please, please love yourselves, so you can touch many lives as you are destined to do. Dream the dream, and make it happen. You are never alone, I am a phone call or a letter away. My heart and dreams and love go out to all of you.

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Justin Gillespie
HOBY '00

The HOBY seminars for 2001 have ended. HOBY hasn't. If someone asked me what it was that was the most important thing to do after HOBY, I would respond, "Keep in touch with your HOBY friends." Since I attended HOBY in 2000, I have met so many new people. I never imagined that I would have so many close friends, especially when most of them live over 100 miles away. The way that all of them care about every other HOBY ambassador amazes me. In just over a year, and in some cases less than three or four months, I have come to feel closer to many of the JC's and 2001 ambassadors than I do to many friends that I have known for many years and seen everyday in school.

My HOBY buddies are always there online ready to joke around or, if necessary, be serious and listen to a problem I have. Sometimes I am overwhelmed with Instant Messages, but it is great to know that so many are there and care so much. I travel around quite a bit with my sports teams and it is neat being able to meet up with a friend from the other school before or after a game. Even if it's for just a few minutes, seeing others who are enthusiastic about HOBY helps keep me the same way. Staying in touch with your HOBY friends is one of the easiest ways to keep the HOBY spirit alive.

If you love HOBY as much as I do, you will almost feel a need to continue communication with friends. HOBY friends are the type of friends you'll have for life.

On a second note, I've found something that has proven interesting. Whenever I go out of town for a camp or seminar or even when I'm just going shopping, I wear a HOBY shirt. You'd be surprised at how many other HOBY alumni will approach you just to let you know that they also were part of this great experience. I recently went to Wisconsin for a seminar and, by wearing one of my shirts, met two awesome people from the Michigan East seminar. Even being at a seminar with some of the top juniors from across the country, I could notice a difference in these two. When other students might just pass and say a simple "Hello," we started up a wonderful conversation while walking to a discussion. Part of this is because by going to HOBY, we all have one little thing in common, and that is enough to build on. We all share something special - we've all experienced the OUTSTANDING power of HOBY - and that is something that can never be taken away from us. Keep the HOBY spirit alive!