

## Katie Vatke BELL Rhode Island 2018- Session 2

One year after BELL Rhode Island, I am currently enrolled at the Ohio State University as a Humanitarian Engineering Scholar and am pursuing a degree in environmental engineering. My action plan ended up being one of the biggest and most rewarding projects I've ever worked on.

After 2 transformative weeks in Rhode Island, I had a reinvigorated passion for solving the water crisis. Since middle school, I had been very passionate about the water crisis. When thinking about what my action plan was going to be, I couldn't help but focus it on my longtime passion. BELL Rhode Island taught me valuable skills to create an action plan that would make an impact.

After going back and forth on a few ideas, I decided I would create a fundraising event for my favorite charity, charity:water. They provide access to clean water to those around the world that don't have access to it. Charity:water also runs on a 100% model where you can see that 100% of your money goes into the projects they fund. I wanted to do something through their #NothingsIsCrazy campaign. In places without access to clean water, Women and children spend most of their days collecting water from the nearest source (which could be miles away). The average 6 kilometers these women and children walk every day often limits them from going to school or starting a business. All for only 5-10 gallons of water. Having water immediately accessible means that I've never had to sacrifice my education, my time or my livelihood in order to have water. Most people in developed nations have never had to think about how drastically different their life would be if they had to walk for their water everyday.

For my action plan, I was going to spend 3 days walking 6 kilometers for for my water for charity:water. I would only be allowed to use the water I was able to carry. This would be for World Water Day in March so I would have plenty of time to start fundraising and getting sponsors. I would vlog my experience and try to educate as many people as I could not only about the water crisis, but of the incredible amount of water we waste in the United States.

In January, I had the amazing opportunity to intern at a small foundation that built and maintained wells in Zimbabwe, called the Rosshirt Water for Africa Foundation. They only had two employees and were just starting to grow as a foundation. We started brainstorming fun things the foundation would be able to do to raise money. Instantly, I told them about my action plan. I decided I would do my walk for water for the Rosshirt Water For Africa Foundation instead. After a few days, we talked about how moving it is for people to experience walking for their water and how we wished there was a way we could have everyone join me on my journey. We recognized that not having access to clean water is something that is very hard to conceptualize. Soon enough, I thought of hosting an event where people had to carry

jerrycans so they could have this experience at least once in their life. That was how the Walk With Water for Africa 5k was created. The next few months leading up to the event were crazy. I was in charge of getting sponsors and participants. We made promotional materials and even secured enough to host a raffle at the 5k.

My action plan had taken a turn entirely for the better. July 6th finally came, and nearly 100 people had shown up to partake in a walk like no other. Filled jerrycans in hand (which is equivalent to about 44lbs), we walked a 5k in the summer heat. The response was amazing. So many people came to tell me that they would have never even thought about what it's like to not have access to clean water. I couldn't believe how many peoples perspectives the walk had impacted. We had news stations at our walk which meant we were able to educate even more people than just the ones walking.

We ended up raising over \$10,000 that went towards the restoration fund to ensure that all wells are maintained. I put my heart and soul into making sure it was the best event I could make it. I've never been more proud or felt like I've had more of an impact. I learned that sometimes collaboration and being open to change will provide you with the best results. I'm so thankful to have been able to be a part of BELL Rhode Island because it motivated me to do something I've always wanted to do, and I've been able to help more people than I thought I could.



JOIN US FOR A WALK IN THE STEPS OF THE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ACROSS AFRICA WHO TRAVEL AN AVERAGE OF 6 MILES DAILY TO GATHER WATER FOR THEIR FAMILIES.



# WALK WITH WATER FOR AFRICA 5K

**SATURDAY, JULY 6, 2019  
9:00 A.M. TO 1:00 P.M.  
PARK OF ROSES SHELTER HOUSE  
3901 N. HIGH ST. COLUMBUS, OH 43214**

PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO CARRY A 5-GALLON JERRYCAN EMPTY OR FILLED WITH WATER, TO PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE THIS CHALLENGING TREK MADE EVERY DAY BY COUNTLESS ZIMBABWEANS.

REGISTRATION FEE IS \$20. SIGN UP ONLINE:  
[ROSSHIRTWATERFORAFRICAFOUNDATION.COM](http://ROSSHIRTWATERFORAFRICAFOUNDATION.COM)

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