

It's tough being a teenager in the 21st Century.

There's confusion about who they are and what they should be, and their actions are so much more visible today than ever before.

But do we really know what's going on behind the scenes of those who the media paint as troublemakers? We are told that those individuals who are causing problems on social media and around the community are bad influences. But what's being done to help them? Are the problems in their life causing them to act this way?

A teenager named Manu had a family that was mostly absent in his life. Manu felt that he couldn't turn to anyone but himself. Going from place to place, experiencing pain and emotional battles that no one else knew about. He started to hang out with the wrong crowd, roaming the streets of the city causing trouble and getting chased because of the things he did. As Manu started to get deeper into trouble, he went from being chased down at night to almost getting stabbed.

Manu wanted to give up. He had become lonely and didn't care about what he was doing or what would happen to him. His happiness disappeared, and his sadness and anger became more visible because of the lack of presence and love in his life.

At the age of 14, Manu was forced to go to a holiday program, but he didn't know that it would change his whole life. The moment Manu took his first step inside the building he was welcomed with open arms by many people, from young to old. It was something that he had never felt before.

On the program, Manu met Louisa. Louisa shared stories about herself and her family. She asked him many questions about his family, friends, and dreams but Manu could only answer with short responses. Manu was still apprehensive, so he kept his distance.

As time went on, Manu kept with the program. He started to feel like it was a place where he belonged and felt safe. Manu became closer to Louisa and her family. Manu started to change as the people around him continued to show him love and respect, show him that he mattered, show him that he had importance.

Manu began to understand what was missing in his life. Community. Manu started to change and became closer with those around him. He started to find friends that would affect his life in a positive situation. Manu became a role model at school and wanted to help the kids who were lost like him. Manu wanted to make a change for the people of his community so that kids like him wouldn't have to experience the same thing.

We judge teenagers based on a small part of what we think is their identity based on their actions. But we don't know their full story.

I want to be like a light house to these teenagers. I want to be able to guide them from their wrongdoings and bring them to a place of safety. I want these teenagers to know that they matter. Just like Manu.