

PEER ED

Hi! I'm Nora and I'm a senior at Bozeman High School. This is my first year as a Peer Educator and I have loved it so much! Along with Peer Ed, I spend my time playing Ice Hockey for the women's high school Ice Dogs team here in Bozeman, writing letters, reading, working at Country Bookshelf, and, of course, high school. I love this town and everything that it offers, and Bridgercare is such an important addition to Bozeman.

So, of course, when I learned of the program Bridgercare runs for teens (Peer Ed), I knew I had to apply. Being in Peer Ed has made me so grateful for the opportunity it has given me to educate my peers on these truly vital subjects.

But, more importantly, Peer Ed has taught me more about real life subjects than I could ever hope to learn from any Health course in high school. I remember middle school sex-ed and even high school sex-ed classes. I recall how annoyed I was at the teachers for skirting around subjects that I found so important, even as a middle schooler. I was fortunate enough to have parents and a family who took it on to educate me in subjects of reproductive health at an early age, so I came into my sex-ed classes with a pretty sturdy background.

But I knew that the kids sitting right next to me in the classroom had no previous experience at all. They were learning everything that they would take into the world from poorly taught sex-ed classes in middle school. Not to slander middle school health teachers of course, but this education was not enough.

I wanted to know more. Abstinence based sexual education didn't accurately cover birth control options, the care and keeping of reproductive organs, or options for what happens when a pregnancy occurs. I wanted to know all of this. When Peer Educators came into my classroom in my sophomore year of high school and started talking, I thought to myself "finally."

These people knew what they were talking about. The lesson went on and they taught us all about everything I had been asking about! I had question after question. I swear I learned more in that one class period alone than in the whole rest of the sexual education unit that year.

So when I learned that Peer Ed was something I could be a part of, I applied! And I have learned more than I ever thought could be available to my young and ever-growing mind! Being given the opportunity to educate kids and my peers on the importance of sexual and reproductive health and healthy relationships may have been one of the best experiences of my high school career.

Even though I have joined this amazing group right in the middle of a pandemic, it still feels like we have made a difference. Even with our limited teaching opportunities! Even with people quarantining every other week! Even though our meetings have been moved to Zoom some weeks! Through all of it, we have kept learning and kept our minds open to change. The fact that we are even trying means so much to me.

Peer Ed has given me the chance to learn new things and experience new things in ways I never thought would be available to me throughout high school. And I am so glad to be a part of it!

