

Mollie Taylor

Lee Williams High School

The Ethical Conundrum

I stood there, in amazement. Was I really watching students vape, right out in the open gym locker room? Emotions flooded my mind like a sea of doubt. I knew that THC vapes were becoming more commonplace, and that students were having near-fatal reactions. I personally knew many students, my age, who were struggling with the side effects vaping brought them. If something is widely accepted, does that make it ethical?

I had to make a difficult decision. I sat there, contemplating my ethical conundrum. I live in one of the top ten poorest areas in America. Many different types of illegal substances are prevalent. I remember hearing my dad, who was the principal at the time, in a recent assembly. "You are in control. Your high school experience is what you make of it. We need leaders. Be an eleven!" Being an eleven at Lee Williams High School is a massive deal, because it honors the loss of eleven volunteer firefighters who passed away in a tragic explosion that took place in my hometown. Our school is named after one of the volunteers who died in the explosion, our principal, Lee Williams. That day, I made the decision to be an eleven, to let ethics guide my actions.

Though I feared retaliation, I informed the assistant principal. I kept second guessing my decision, but right is right. However, when a security guard stepped into the locker room and interrogated the girls who were vaping, I could feel their eyes glaring right in my direction. I was the only one in the locker room with them while they were vaping, so they automatically knew that I was the one who told administration. As soon as security



left, I became surrounded by at least five girls who were significantly taller and stronger than me. The girls began to scream horrific things at me and repeatedly threatened to harm me. Luckily the gym teacher could hear the commotion, and she quickly brought me to safety and to my next class.

The next day I found out there were multiple social media posts threatening me for "snitching". Many of my classmates stepped up and confronted the girls, reminding them that I had done nothing wrong, and even offered to walk me to my classes for protection. I was shocked at how many people I barely even knew offered their support and praise for what I had done. It made me realize that my ethical decision positively impacted others around me, and encouraged my peers to also be an eleven.

There are many other people who want to be an eleven too, and all it takes is one person to lead by example. Albert Schweitzer once said, "The first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings." I'm proud to have been in solidarity with my fellow Volunteers at Lee Williams High School. I can honestly say that, together, we made a positive difference.