



January's YLI Experience Day focused on the topics of Diversity and Inclusion. YLIers visited Drake University, Wellmark, and the Johnston Gurudwara Sahib (Sikh temple).

At Drake University, students learned about Drake initiatives around diversity and inclusion from Erin Lain, the college's Associate Provost for Campus Equity and Inclusion. Erin took the students through an activity where they self-identified with statements associated with privilege. The activity was eye-opening for the group and challenged them to be brave among their peers as they honestly answered questions about their lives.

Next the group visited Wellmark for a session with the Inclusion Council. Adding to their understanding of diversity and inclusion, YLIers connected the actions and initiatives of the Wellmark council to the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. Students learned about practical ways the organization is focused on attracting and retaining the best talent and how central inclusion is to the organizational culture.

The group next visited the Johnston Gurudwara Sahib (Sikh temple) to learn about the bright and beautiful community of Sikh families in central Iowa. The students learned about the Sikh faith and traditions and lived experience in the community.

Five YLIers experienced the day as a marginalized group firsthand. A group of students received red bandanas at the beginning of the day and were asked to wear the bandanas around their heads or necks throughout the day. These students boarded busses last, were ordered to perform menial tasks for the rest of the group, ate last and, most obviously, were not spoken to by the rest of the YLI students (to the extent possible). This was hard on the "red bandanas" and also hard for the rest of the students, as they all wanted to talk to each other. Some students felt sorry for or frustrated by the treatment of the "red bandanas" and even went as far as to try to encourage them to stand up for themselves - to challenge the process. The students were able to get a glimpse of what some in our community experience daily.

On Monday, Jan. 23, the students gathered at the United Way of Central Iowa offices to learn about their group service projects that will take place April 13 and had the opportunity to hear from representatives from each partnering organization.