

WFWP USA: Wellness for Women: My Story of Starting a Nonprofit in High School

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Women's empowerment comes in many forms. Sometimes it manifests in marches, passing legislation, or breaking glass ceilings. But for me, it started with a makeup bag.

Every morning I follow the same rhythm: I wake up, brush my teeth, and sit at my desk to put on makeup. There is something strangely comforting in those quiet minutes before school. The familiar routine of applying moisturizer, foundation, and blush, paired with feeling more ready to face the day than when I initially sat down. As a rising senior managing countless assignments, extracurriculars, and responsibilities, doing my skincare and makeup is a sacred time free from the incoming obligations I will inevitably have to face during the day. But this ritual is more than just an act of self-care. It's also my armor. It makes me feel a little more put together, confident, and ready.

My closest friends and I share this love for makeup. Whether it's exchanging lipgloss in our Latin class or showing off our new mascara in between class periods, there is a special bond in makeup that connects women in unique ways. However, I recognize that not everyone has access to such items. In Refinery 29's YouTube video *What Beauty Is Like For Homeless Women On The Streets*, I realized that while makeup equips homeless women with the confidence to feel their best, they often lack access to it. But given that nearly 70% of job employers said they would be less likely to hire a female job applicant who didn't wear makeup to an interview, I realized there was a significant issue largely unaddressed in my community. It was from this gap that Wellness for Women was born. Thus, my best friends and I created Wellness for Women to create broader access to an underappreciated item, aiming to promote dignity, professional development, and confidence.

Starting a nonprofit in high school truly wasn't easy. I was already bombarded with tests and assignments from school, not to mention a plethora of other commitments throughout the week. At one point, I felt paralyzed. It wasn't just my busy schedule holding me back, but also the latent and deep-rooted thought, What if I fail?

Ultimately, two words pushed me and my team forward: Just start. While I'd love to say that those words alone broke the cycle of inaction, they didn't. The success of Wellness for Women came from hundreds of "just start" moments, continuous team efforts, and constantly striving for better. Despite the initial challenges, we collected over 1,200 products and raised almost \$14,000 worth of self-care products in our first makeup and skincare drive alone.

I learned many valuable lessons from Wellness for Women. Namely, the ability to take initiative from within, to communicate with others, and to be honest with myself. But above all, it reaffirmed the importance of service to others and turning empathy into tangible action. As such, Wellness for Women has become, in many ways, a love letter to all women: a reminder that we are all worthy of feeling prepared to face the world.

Today, that mission continues to evolve. Wellness for Women works to advocate for equity, empathy, and empowerment not just for women, but for all who feel unseen. In every product we collect and every life we touch, we carry the belief that confidence is more than a privilege - and that even the seemingly small acts of care can be revolutionary.