

**Inspirational Teacher Adam Burns**  
**A Story by Griffin Olis**

Adam Burns has had by far the greatest positive impact on my education and my life. No teacher has gone to greater lengths to support me inside and outside of the classroom. He consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty to meet the needs of his students, whether it be securing grants for thousands of dollars to help fund student projects and supply the broadcasting class with the latest equipment, teaching each day with a creative approach, or just simply by being someone to go to for advice. He teaches a wide array of students and does everything he can to ensure a safe and fun environment for everyone to explore their creativity.

The greatest thing about Mr. Burns was that his belief in me was total. I always felt that I had talent as a filmmaker, but he helped me take that talent and turn it into work that impacts the world.

The first project he guided me through was *The 1%: Crisis in the Great Lakes*, which I was working on for the C-SPAN StudentCam competition. We were lucky enough to win a first-place award in the contest, and couldn't have done it without him. It was Mr. Burns who helped us secure our first interview with a state politician who was the friend of the father of one of his friends. It was a tenuous connection, but he went for it. It was Mr. Burns who took a personal day to drive us to Flint, Michigan to get shots and interviews when our parents wouldn't let us go on our own. It was Mr. Burns who saw that what we created was more than a documentary for a single contest, encouraged us to send it to film festivals, and celebrated every one of the 34 that accepted it.

I traveled to the Dominican Republic during my junior year to make a documentary on a foundation that was moving to Haiti. Mr. Burns took one look at the documentary and told me it was more than just a commercial for the Joan Rose Foundation. He got me involved with my school's student council, even got them to create a Creative Director position just for me. He encouraged me to present an application for my school's charity week on behalf of the foundation, which was accepted. The charity wound up receiving \$84,000 from my school, which was used to build a new learning center and cafeteria, provide food and clothing, and hire two teachers.

I'll never forget what he told me after the total was revealed: "This is all because of the video *you* made." It was then that I knew for certain not just that I wanted to be a filmmaker, but that through filmmaking, I had the power to change the world.

I don't know if anyone has ever told Mr. Burns that something was all because of *him*, and that he has the power to change the world, so I hope this will suffice.

Sincerely,

Griffin Olis