Essay Contest

By Braxton Dodson

I was raised by a single mother. I am a football player and I compete in weight lifting. When I was five, my mother and I volunteered at the Midland Soup Kitchen, she was trying to teach me a valuable lesson. I was five, I didn't get the lesson. In grade school, she had me selling every fund raiser the school had to offer, I hated fund raisers. She told me, "It is for the school." As I got older, we took blankets to the animal shelter, we handed five dollars to every person standing on the side of the road holding a sign, we gave food to the Food Bank, we walked for the March of Dimes and sold T-shirts for Breast cancer awareness. Inever understood exactly why we did so much for strangers. I dreaded every time she took me with her as she volunteered.

Some people say that wisdom comes with experience, and with experience comes knowledge. Before completing my volunteer hours for the Legacy Scholarship program, I was doubtful that I was going to gain either experience or knowledge by volunteering. Than I had the opportunity to meet and volunteer with most amazing group of people at the Wagner Noel Concert Hall People who dedicated part of their lives to give back to their community. They used their personal life experiences to donate their time and knowledge. Now I understand what my mother was trying to teach me all those years.

While volunteering at the Wagner Noel Concert Hall, I helped with the merchandise. I was glad I worked out, my physical strength was needed to load and unload the merchandise. So I was able to use my interest in physical fitness to help others. As I worked I heard the announcers' voice. It sounded very familiar. As the evening passed, I sent out to find this familiar voice. Finding him and introducing myself, he told me his name was Mike Peek. I had heard his voice at every Friday night football game I played this senior year. As we talked, he told me he was the Grande Communications event announcer. I instantly felt like I was hanging out with a super star. Mike told me when he started being the voice of Grande and how he helps at the Carter Center supervising test rooms. I felt encouraged and realized that there might be something to volunteering. Even superstars volunteer. Mike used his incredible strong voice to help. I used my strength.

Volunteering my time and energy, gave me insightful realization. Whatever you give away, you somehow get back. You need to give away whatever you personally want. You want respect? You have to give it. You want someone to work hard for you? You have to work hard for them. You want mercy and compassion, you have to give it. I now understand what my mother was trying to teach me. I will soon be heading off to College, with the understanding that you have to give respect, work hard, and have compassion and mercy, because you never know when you will need this yourself. I currently volunteer at the YMCA to help youth feel empowerment through physical fitness. I know we all have something we can share with others.