A volunteer is defined as somebody who works for nothing. Initially, my view of helping as a volunteer completely lined up with this definition. I would work for nothing because it was required for the Legacy Scholarship. But, my service for Meals on Wheels and Midland Teen Court became much more to me because I gained knowledge, compassion, understanding and respect for others from volunteering.

My knowledge of Texas traffic laws and the judicial system greatly increased during jury service for Midland Teen Court. This organization educates teens on how the system of justice works by introducing them to a courtroom and a presiding judge. While serving in traffic court, I heard repeatedly how teens had made silly and risky driving decisions. For me, this helped to reinforce the importance for obeying traffic laws, and was a great refresher course of Texas driving laws.

Helping the elderly while delivering for Meals on Wheels developed more compassion in me. I saw the isolation that occurs with the elderly, and the loneliness that comes from an inability to physically handle many of the demands of society. These senior citizens were hungry for so much more than food. They were hungry for human interaction and contact. I had never considered the number of people who are homebound, and desperate for human contact. I am grateful for this opportunity because it helped me develop kindness and concern for the aged.

My service with these agencies brought understanding in so many ways. Observing repeat offenders of traffic laws helped me see how costly a traffic violation can be in terms of time, as well as money. When hurrying to get somewhere, speeding can lead to a ticket which will make a person even later. Tickets are a huge waste of money and time. Meals on Wheels helped me to understand the needs of the elderly, and gave me a different view of
what older people are like. Even though they are wrinkled, slow, and hard of hearing, we share the same social, psychological and physical needs.

I learned respect for others while volunteering. At Teen Court, I served with teens from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Hearing their testimonies helped me gain appreciation for our similarities and differences. Though I may not agree with all of their decisions, I could value their individuality. My respect for the elderly increased while helping with Meals on Wheels. I had never thought about the elderly living a life like mine. They had been a teenager and a young adult, and had similar hopes and dreams. We shared more in common than I realized, and I was blessed to serve them.

I served as a volunteer for the Legacy Scholarship, and a volunteer is someone who works for nothing. This doesn't really sum up the term for me though. I served people. People are not nothing. They are valuable and special. I gained much more than I gave because I came away with greater knowledge, compassion, understanding and respect.