Honestly, when my mom started asking me about my service hours for the Legacy Scholarship, I wasn’t thrilled. Like any self-centered teenager, I’d rather spend my time hanging out with friends, relaxing at my house or even looking at the pointless apps on my phone. But I learned that getting out of your comfort zone can change your life.

Again with honesty, had my mom not nagged on me so often to find an organization, I probably would not have completed the required forty hours. Did I mention I have a tendency to be lazy? I’m blessed to have a mom who cares enough to bother me about things that will have a positive impact on my life.

Searching, searching, and searching. What sounds interesting? Should it be the Soup Kitchen, Helping Hands, the Petroleum Museum, Rays of Hope? I quickly realized there are a lot of people that need a lot of help; simply a copious amount of people that would love to have my time. Which one to pick? I was struggling with this decision. I wanted to at least enjoy spending my “precious” time, and know I was doing something that would positively impact someone else.

I chose Christmas for OUR Troops. I believe we are blessed beyond measure to live in this country. We are a great nation because of the brave men and women who devote their lives to defending us. Christmas for OUR Troops is a non-profit organization that sends out Christmas care packages to service men and women stationed around the world. Showing our
soldiers that someone appreciates their sacrifice, and spreading Christmas cheer; this was a win-win situation!

I arrived at a small warehouse on the outskirts of town. I was nervous, and a little scared that I would mess up. If you knew me, I’m likely to trip and knock over a box full of supplies, spill something on an important document or accidentally set the warehouse ablaze. Luckily, all they needed me to do that first night was count and stack socks into a big box. Counting, that is simple enough. So count I did; socks, books, bars of soap, packages of beef jerky, toothbrushes, and you can’t forget the candy. What’s a care package without candy?

This whole volunteering thing wasn’t so bad. So night after night I went back. Counting, organizing, moving boxes, and talking to others who also wanted to give back to the people who give so much. The hours flew by. It’s true what they say, time flies when you are having fun. My favorite part of the experience was reading letters to our soldiers from young kids. Their thank you notes were precious and heartwarming.

The last and final day was scheduled. All the supplies we had counted, separated and organized for the past few weeks were to be put into the individual boxes and sent all over the world. I was excited to see all of our hard work come together. There was one problem; the pack-up day was also a school day. I didn’t know what to do. I wanted to help, but I hate trying to make up missed schoolwork. I decided that my sacrifice was so small in comparison to soldiers risking their lives. That last day was long and draining, but seeing fifteen hundred boxes make their way to the Fed-Ex truck made me so glad I chose to miss my “regular” day, and got to experience serving others.
In the beginning, I did not want to volunteer. I didn’t want to waste my time. It was just one more thing to add to my busy schedule; one more thing to make me get less sleep. However, it was refreshing to know that I might bring a smile to someone I will probably never meet. Our troops are away from their home and family during the holiday season all to protect us. Giving a tiny slice of my time will never compare to their service. The Legacy Scholarship helped me to realize that the world does not revolve around me, and that the giving of my time can be a blessing to someone else; which in turn is a blessing to me. Now that is a real win-win situation. I cannot wait to help Christmas for OUR Troops again this year and hopefully for many years to come.