Essay Contest

By Jacob Milam

My name is Jacob Milam. I am seventeen years old and the fifth of six children. I was born in Lubbock Texas, but have lived most of my life in Midland. My mom homeschooled me my entire school career. She taught me not only excellence in academics, but also life skills including money management, work ethic, cooking, cleaning and the importance of giving. I currently hold a 4.0 from my first semester here at Midland College. I have two older brothers who have already received their associate's degrees from Midland College having been recipients of the Legacy Scholarship. They both graduated with highest honors from Midland College. Since we have such a large family, my parents have always appreciated the opportunity for each of us to receive the Legacy Scholarship. We are indebted to the generous donors of this scholarship and feel extremely blessed to live in community that have both people and organizations that place such a high value on education. In addition, this essay contest affords me another opportunity for scholarship money. I believe the community service requirement is beneficial to both the student and the community and is an essential part of the Legacy Scholarship requirements.

For my community service, I chose Helping Hands and Meals on Wheels. Helping Hands is a non-profit organization that takes used and unwanted items and sells them back to the community for a drastically reduced price. Due to the inflated prices and increased cost of living here in Midland caused by the oil boom some families find it difficult to acquire much needed items. Because of this fact, I believe Helping Hands is vitally important to this community. When I arrived to volunteer, my first task was organizing an entire toy room. The room looked as if a tornado had recently been through it. There was absolutely no organization at all. The woman in charge left me at the room with the words "Good Luck". My first thought was that I was never going to be able to complete this job alone. Initially, the task seemed completely overwhelming. However, my mom is the queen of organization so I knew that organizing had to be somewhere in my genes. I just needed a plan. As I analyzed the task, evaluated the room and envisioned the ending results, I determined to start with categories. I chose to separate as follows: boy toys on the left side of the room, girl toys on the right side, and infant toys in the middle. I also had to determine whether a toy was worth keeping (had all the required pieces and would operate correctly) or should it be trashed. After several hours of toil, I finally completed this project. The woman was amazed at the transformation in the room going from disaster to order.

The highlight of my day came when I carried some of the toys down to the children. I watched as their faces lit up and they squealed with excitement when they took the toys from me. What others, including myself, may view as nothing more than trash, these kids looked at as valued treasure. It became very apparent to me that these families have been through hard times financially and that something useless to me can be such a gift to them.

My next opportunity to volunteer was Meals on Wheels. I helped prepare and assemble the meals and then assisted with the delivery. I first noticed that the majority of the volunteers
were elderly people (some of these individuals may soon be qualified to receive these very meals themselves). I got the impression they were giving in anticipation of someday needing to receive. It was enjoyable to hear all the stories they had to share. Older people are not only a wealth of knowledge but also of experiences. I think as young people we often miss the opportunity to spend time with them and learn from their varied life journeys.

During the delivery process, I quickly realized that each elderly person I met has a different perspective on what this service means to them. One widowed woman on my route was not able to walk, so we actually took the meal into her home. Others were excited just for the chance to interact with another person that day. On more than one occasion, I was invited into their home to share their meager portions because they so genuinely craved company. There was one woman who could not speak English yet she worked desperately to communicate her gratitude for the meal. I did not encounter a single person who was not extremely appreciative of what this service provides to them.

It is apparent that Meals on Wheels truly cares about each life they touch. Every person on the route has individualized instructions relating specifically to their personal situation and needs. In many of these cases, the organization is helping take care of elderly individuals or couples where their families are not involved. However, even when there is family involvement, Meals on Wheels still provides a vital role. My experiences in working with this non-profit organization made me realize how necessary this program is in the lives of so many people.

We should strive each day to positively impact the lives of those around us. Meals on Wheels truly embraces that idea. Every day they provide not only nutrition for the body, but also encouragement and a smile for the spirit of these dear elderly individuals. These experiences have given me a new appreciation for the opportunity to give back to my community. Life is short and I desire to live every day to the fullest bringing joy to the lives of others. It truly amazed me how much of an impact my small deeds had on the lives of others. Initially, I envisioned that I would be blessing their lives with my service when in actuality, they blessed me. The fact we must do community service helps us to not only realize but also appreciate how materially blessed we truly are. This is why I believe the community service requirement is vitally important to receiving the Legacy Scholarship. Just as I witnessed with the elderly volunteers, we too should give in anticipation of being allowed to receive.