Legacy Essay Contest

Community. In a community, people live and thrive as a group. When one area of the community needs help, others must come together and work to bring up the weak links. That is what community service is about.

This last year, I had the privilege of working at Helping Hands over Spring Break. At Helping Hands, I was able to see multiple aspects of not only the needy community, but the giving community as well. I got the opportunity to help in various areas that Helping Hands works in.

The first day that I was there, I worked with multiple guys, aged around 16-25, that were at work there for community service for probation rather than for scholarship purposes. Now at first, I was pretty hesitant and somewhat fearful of these guys, but as I spent more time around them, I lost that fear and saw us as more of equals. So at first, I guess I just saw myself as better than them just because I thought that since my community service was for something I was doing right rather than what I had done wrong. We were all there, no matter the reason, to help the needy community.

I spent the majority of my time the first three days sorting donations, getting them ready to move to the store up front. The first day, there were four truckloads of donations needed to be sorted. The things donated varied from tiny kid toys to large T.V.'s and cabinets. It was astounding to see all the things collected by a single church and how much people donated.

The fourth day was an interesting day. I arrived and began working on sorting donations like the past days and one of the leaders there came to me and asked if I would go pick up donations from a church a few blocks away. I obliged and spent the next hour driving a box truck to pick up the donations and bring them back to the warehouse. Once I returned, I was given a paper with several more houses to drive to for donations. I was able to drive around and meet several people with their donations and had the privilege of talking with these people. A few of these giving donations expressed their gratitude
for places like Helping Hands and told me stories of how they regularly donate things to Helping Hands. I went home that day just feeling good about the giving hearts of so many Midlanders.

On my final day at Helping Hands, I got to spend some time in the actual store up front and saw many different people as they came to pay extremely low prices for these donations. I met with regulars around the store as well as new shoppers. It was astounding to see the different kinds of people that were shopping there and it was amazing to see all the smiles on their faces. They were so joyful to be there and nothing seemed to phase that happiness.

The largest impact on me in this work was the regular volunteers as well as the leaders of the service. The first day that I walked into the building, I met with a sweet lady named Mary, who seemed in her 50s or 60s. In waiting to be given a job, I looked at the pictures up on the wall and was so amazed at the many years Mary had spent with these people, coming every morning to serve with a willing and loving heart. She sent me into a room in the back where I met J.J., an older black man who was on crutches for only having one leg. It was astounding to see the love, energy and service J.J. poured out everyday of work. J.J. was once one of the people only visiting Helping Hands for help and ended up becoming one of the leading workers of the service. J.J. gave more than he appeared to have to offer the community every day.

All in all, I saw so much in working with Helping Hands. I saw how our community gave back to those who had less than they had, as well as those in need of the donations given each day. I definitely enjoyed my time serving the community at Helping Hands and feel now that I have even become a better person through only a week's worth of service.