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### Personal Reflection

Throughout all of this year, I have engaged in community service activities, in the hope that I will be accepted to NJHS. After time had gone by, I realized I no longer did this because it was required, but rather for the sense of accomplishment and pride that it brought me. I have been helping out in my sixth grade teacher's classroom, my ballet studio, and I also participated in a library activity. In my sixth grade classroom, I planned to help the students with their accelerated math, and possibly file papers. I did help students learn math concepts and formulas, but there was a lot more work than just that. I helped grade papers, pass back work, and I filed papers in students' folders almost every week. I planned to earn my hours at the ballet studio by simply helping wherever I was needed, from the labelling costumes to organizing sock drawers, which is exactly what I did. I tried to be helpful in finding tasks that I could carry out, even simple ones. A lot of my service was making labels for costumes, tedious but necessary. At the library, I planned to help kids mostly with choosing books, or setting and cleaning up. Instead, I helped out with the craft table, teaching kids how to make a dog puppet, or encouraging their creativity to decorate a bag with stickers. These all had positive outcomes for me, my teammates, and those that I assisted. In the classroom, it strengthened the bond between me and former classmates who also helped out. I gained a sense of pride in helping others learn, and it helped me understand the duties of a teacher. It helped my teacher by relieving her of some of the huge burden of providing twenty-five students with a good education. It helped the students

because they were able to better understand certain concepts of math that will be the basic structure of many more lessons to come. At the ballet studio, I developed a good relationship with many of the parent volunteers, which taught me how to respect my superiors. It also lessened the long list of tasks that needed to be taken care of for the studio to run smoothly. In the library, I learned valuable skills of communication that will help me become a better person. I was able to see when people needed help with the project, and when they wanted to figure it out on their own. For those that I did help, they were able to find a sense of satisfaction in completing the craft. When participating in these activities, I felt responsible, mature, accomplished, and proud. I felt as if I was maturing into a young adult who could be trusted to carry out important tasks when I helped out at the ballet studio. The sense of pride and accomplishment came from seeing the light of understanding dawn in a student's eyes, or seeing their excited faces after scoring very high on an assignment, and also from receiving praise for my two hours of good, honest work at the library. During these various activities, I perceived many things, but mostly the emotions of people I was working with. In the classroom and library, it was often frustration, that turned into gratitude or relief after I stepped in to help. I also perceived the way the adults involved treated me. They all seemed to respect and trust me, which made me feel very mature. I had a lot of different thoughts about these activities, and one of the first was that really enjoyed volunteering my time. All of the activities made me feel useful, and I genuinely liked helping other kids. As for meaning, these activities were meaningful to me because of their effects on those I was helping. I would love to consider myself a helpful person, and while participating in community service I was able to feel this way. A lesson I learned from these activities is that volunteering your time is not a waste at all. You

are able to enhance other people's lives, and make a difference in your community. These skills are much more important than physical characteristics. I will apply this to other aspects of my life whenever I am given the opportunity to help. Remembering how meaningful community service is to other people will help me make the decision to take that opportunity, even if it takes away from my time. This activity did cause a change in my perspective, because I was able to view areas of life from my superiors' perspective. I now understand that teachers and staff have the responsibility of educating several people at once, and keeping themselves organized at the same time. This is a lot to ask for, and is often underestimated by middle-school aged students. We tend to take everything for granted, but these activities have allowed me to gain new insight into the challenges teachers face and the sacrifices they make for us as students.

At Ensign, I have participated in two different clubs throughout this year: Garden Club and Book Club. These two clubs have helped broaden my horizons, and given me new insight into the lives of others. In book club, I simply am assigned a book to read in a few months. There is then a meeting to discuss the book; the characters, plot, similarities to real life, and important or meaningful events. The outcomes of this are significant. The librarian, Mrs. Schaeffer, always seems to pick just the right book, compelling, but very meaningful as well. We learn many lessons from those books that we can use throughout the rest of our lives. The books we have read so far, The Elephant In the Garden, A Bandit's Tale, Echo, Save Me A Seat, and All Rise For the Honorable Perry T. Cook, have all been centered around some type of injustice that was discussed through the book. This has led to my team members and I gaining a powerful sense of wrong and right, and how to become a good person. In garden club, I work for thirty minutes every Monday, to weed, water, and/or plant new plants. The outcomes of this are

that my teammates and I learn how to garden, Ms. Rush's garden stays healthy, and we all learn how to work as a team. During these activities, I feel invigorated, like I am where I belong. I love gardening, and some hard, honest work is good for me in the age of technology. Plus, I get a chance to clear my head and think. In book club, I get to discuss books, one of my favorite subjects, and people's motives and emotions, another of my favorite subjects. My thoughts about the activity are that they are good things for me to be doing. Literature is so important, and to me, gardening is too. The world started out basically as one big garden, so having a garden is important to keep in touch with all things natural. Plus, a garden can provide food too. These activities, again, mean a lot to me. For one, I like to be able to socialize with people that think like me. Most of the people in both clubs are there because they genuinely like the activity, so I have both people and activities I can relate to. This is precisely the value of the activity as well. Being able to socially connect with people like me is very important to being successful in life. It also pays to be able to appreciate things like literature and nature, instead of video games and cell phones. I learned from these activities that it is important to open your heart to everyone, and be able to work as a team. In book club, the idea that all people are potentially good people was introduced, and the lesson of teamwork was taught in garden club. These are important things to know for later in life, and I can apply these concepts to all aspects of life. They will help me find a strong support system of people who will stay with me for the rest of my life. My perspective was definitely changed by these activities. I learned in book club that people do have struggles in everyday life, and just because I don't see them doesn't mean they aren't there. You should always try to help people, because they deserve help as much as you do.

In garden club, I realized that teamwork is an extremely important part of success, and even working with people you don't like is inevitable.

So, here it is. My NJHS application. At the beginning of the year, I signed up for community service and Ensign clubs for the sole reason to be accepted to the National Junior Honors Society. Now, I continue them because they will have a huge influence on my later life. All of these activities have taught me priceless skills that are crucial to my success as a good person. That's not the only reason I continue, though. These activities are fun, and I enjoy giving my time to others, whether it's to discuss a book, solve a math problem, or plant some cabbages. What I'm trying to say here is that I am the kind of person who wants to become the best I can possibly be. Being in NJHS is a goal that I have had for myself, and I have tried my very best to grow into a mature young adult. The requirements for NJHS are habits that will help me reach this goal of becoming a person who can make an impact on the world. So please, consider all of this information in my request to become part of the Ensign chapter of the National Junior Honor Society. I thank you for your time and consideration.



## How Did I Feel While Participating in my Community Service Time ?

For my community service project, I planned on working at some local pet organizations, but, because of age limits and parent-guardian rules, I was not allowed to volunteer. I ended up stumbling upon Kriser's Natural Pet, a small pet shop in Westcliff Plaza in need of some help for their upcoming fundraiser, and as it turns out, we were just the kids to do it. The second place I signed up at was the Incredible Edible Farm in Irvine, an area of farmland in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank.

At Kriser's, a group of friends and I would plan and initiate a fundraiser by setting up a table, sign and donation basket, and preparing for the upcoming crowd of middle-schoolers and parents out for lunch. The reason we executed this fundraiser was, at first, a reason to build up on the community hours, but eventually became something we believed in. Our cause was for our veterans that have come home with a common disease, called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This happens when a person is exposed to mortifying experiences, and cannot overcome their fear of the situation, which eventually leads to them becoming angry and scared. PTSD is an emotional disease that can be helped, as long as you take time and have patience. Supplying a loving companion for these veterans can be expensive, especially when they are trained service dogs, and that is why we raised money for their cause. Our dedication each and every Wednesday led us to over three hundred dollars, all to help veterans in need. One of the employees has overcome PTSD through his shorthair dog,

Sasha. The outcome for me and my group was an amazing experience and a few veterans being helped with their PTSD! While doing this activity, I felt empowered to speak up to people and stand up for something I truly believed in. I thought that the activity was an experience not many get, and when we really embraced our opportunities, we discovered a whole world of which our help was encouraged, and actually needed. These actions, to me, meant that I was being a better person, and was really trying to make a difference in our society.

Working at the Incredible Edible Farm was a eye opening experience. Their foundation brings food straight from the ground to people's plates in just forty eight hours. Working there proved to me that anything helps, and that not everybody is as well off as I am, not just in faraway, isolated places, but locally. There, I spent hours in the sun picking beets and celery, uprooting old irrigation tubes and planting cabbage. I learned how to harvest beets and chop down broccoli and cauliflower, of which we harvested over a dozen full size crates. This experience gave me insight to what it would be like to have this be your full time job, and major respect for those who do this backbreaking work every day. After my involvement in this type of work, I realized how fortunate I am to be able to do this difficult manual labor because I chose to, not because I am doing it to earn my living. This foundation is making a big difference in the world, and made a significant impression on my view of how I could participate and be part of the process. I learned that something as simple as picking vegetables for the hungry can make a considerable difference.

The last place that I volunteered at was the Mariner's Library. Nearly every Thursday I shelved books for an hour. Although this may be tedious and feel like pointless work to some people, it's the only way the library can function, so it really made a difference to a communal place that makes a difference in many people's lives. While I was there, families came into to read and do homework, and groups of kids played games on the computer after school. The reason I was there was to organize books, allowing people to easily find them, so they would come back again and again, keeping the library up and running. If the library closed down, many people would be forced to find some other way to find books and entertainment. To me, this was a place for newcomers and people searching for a safe and peaceful setting. Just as my other experiences did, the library opened my eyes to a world where everyone is equal, and all help is accepted.

Overall, my experience volunteering was really influential and showed me how impactful my individual work can be. If everyone was exposed to what is going on in the world, then more people would volunteer their time to helping make the world even just a little bit of a better place. Learning about and participating in community service has showed me that there are ways to help others and influence even more to do the same.



## Community Service

For my community service hours, I hunted down a pet store in need of some fresh faces, an understaffed library and a volunteer based farm. Through this I discovered the beauty in doing things for others and how just one person can make a major difference.

While I was participating in the many volunteer opportunities I was given, I felt like I was able to do something in the world, instead of sitting by aimlessly. Feeling like I was important in the process of making the world a better place boosted my self confidence and gave me pride in what I was doing. I recognized and joined groups of people that valued community and teamwork and encourage the contributions of others. To me, this meant I was becoming more aware of the positive and negative affects of the the things I do, or, on occasion, don't do, leading me to be more independent and understanding the difficulty in owning up to the actions we contribute. I learned the value of our actions and how it can have a lasting effect on those who need our help. I can apply the experience I gained into my daily life by being more understanding and helpful because I have been exposed to an area I have never really looked into aiding before, so this will expand my boundaries of things I want to try and things I can venture out to do to help others. Overall, this experience altered my perspective of recognizing how people need help and the impact I make while doing it.

Kate Gregory

## Art Club

Every Monday, I participate in art club to have fun and be creative. During this hour, we are allowed to use any art supplies in the room, fueling our imaginations and talent. The outcome from the club is that it gives kids a chance to be resourceful, using their vision to design something without any limitations; which makes for a really relaxed, inviting atmosphere.

While I am at art club, I am solely focused on whatever I am working on, whether it be an intricate painting or a simple mug made of clay. I am taken away from the place full of worries about school and friends, to a world where I can relax and create things I have only been able to visualize in my mind. To me this means that I have time to do what I love and to be really focused and sincere about it. Otherwise, I might be distracted by my phone, and not taking my own time to do something I love. I can apply this important lesson to my life by knowing that self care can do wonders. For me, art is something that makes me happier and rejuvenated. Art club has helped me perceive that sometimes the most important thing is taking time to yourself.