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ACCA Scholarship

Making a difference and investing in one's community through volunteerism is something which I feel is the most influential way to improve a community. Although it may seem difficult to comprehend how a volunteer can make a difference in a community, the results are numerous. There are many ways in which one can make a difference in their community, such as, volunteering at a senior center, joining an environmental club, or even volunteering at a library. The importance and the influence of volunteerism is clear, when one person decides to take time from their schedule, to focus on a problem or a situation in their community in which they can improve and will strive to turn that negative situation into a positive outcome, not only does the community in a whole improve, the people within the community become inspired by that volunteer's position and vision, and become volunteers themselves. Nothing is more inspiring than having everyone in a community volunteer through different organizations to make a difference; I have seen this first hand.

I myself have been a volunteer at Lincolnia Senior center since the beginning of my junior year of high school. I feel that through my volunteerism at the senior center, I was able to make a difference in my community by investing my time with the senior citizens of my community. I was in charge of managing the front desk and other activities as well. After a while though, I was intrigued by the seniors within the center. I became intrigued with the stories that the senior citizens would tell me, I formed friendships with many of them, and I was just so inspired to make a difference within this community. Whether it was teaching smartphone classes, holding book clubs, or just playing games, I took advantage of this volunteer opportunity and decided to become an active member within the senior center and before I knew it the classes, clubs, and game sessions was becoming more popular. After a few months of volunteering there, I noticed that many of the seniors were beginning to volunteer at the front desk and becoming more involved within the center. Many of these seniors were coming from the housing next to the center and became active volunteers and showed great enthusiasm when it came to activities such as flea markets, etc. Once I became accustomed with the daily routines and the staff, we became a community within a community. My main goal was to keep on improving and invest as much time as I possibly could to aid the senior citizens and not make them feel a sense of hopelessness or loneliness. I wanted to brighten up their day whether it was just with a conversation or even a quick greeting, whatever I could possibly do to create a positive atmosphere, and I'm quite sure that I have achieved that goal.

Another act of volunteerism in which I am apart of is Wegene Children's Foundation (WEGENE). WEGENE is a foundation which raises money for underprivileged children in Ethiopia. As president amongst the younger generation of this foundation I was able to organize numerous fundraisers such as a backpack and other school supplies, home-made cakes, gala, and an oldies night, an event in which the adult members danced with throwbacks from their

generation's music genre, and many more to either donate to many children in Ethiopia or raise money to donate to the children as well. I also organized a few events which included going to homeless shelters in Arlington and D.C. where members and I gave sandwiches, which were made prior to the visit, as well as serving the homeless within the soup kitchens. This experience was a huge eye-opener for me. It showed me that no matter how little or how much a person has, it is always important to give back, it doesn't necessarily have to be money, but a kind act is all you need to brighten up someone's day. Through this organization I was able to create a blueprint of a school which the foundation has partnered with a company in Ethiopia to build a school for those underprivileged children. Being a part of this fantastic foundation has taught me that people, no matter the age or maturity level, if they have the same interests and goals, then they can really impact their community in a way that so inspiring that people who aren't involved would be intrigued by this group and before you know it, you have a foundation such as WEGENE developing right in front you. Being of Ethiopian heritage, my Ethiopian community means a lot to me, and I would do whatever it takes to protect and improve it.

In conclusion, through volunteerism one can really improve their community by investing any amount of time and having a set goal. Volunteerism is very important, and I cherish my volunteer experience at the senior center as well as WEGENE, and plan to continue my leadership role in WEGENE and become even more involved in the senior center during my college career.