

Katie Emmons - HAGA Scholarship Essay

Growing up I was constantly involved within my local community. Whether it was through my church youth group or my extra-curricular dance activities, I was always participating in something. Working within the community is truly one of the best reality checks you can experience. It teaches you that there is so much more to life than personal wants and needs. One of my most favorite experiences to partake in was in Shreveport, Louisiana at one of the Shriners Hospitals for Children.

There are numerous Shriners around the country, each focusing on different specialties. This particular location in Shreveport focuses on orthopedics and cleft lip/palate correction. Our purpose in going to the hospital was to help deep clean all of their activity rooms and each of the strollers that are assigned to the children during their time at the hospital. While we were there, the hospital was facilitating a special program based out of the country of Panama. The hospital had worked to bring children in need of major orthopedic surgeries to the United States to receive proper care and rehabilitation opportunities. Some of these children were already in town during our visit. In between helping the hospital staff with some of their housekeeping needs, we got to spend our free time in the activity rooms with these children and their families. The genuine joy they possessed resonated in everything they did, and it is something I cannot adequately describe. Some of these families left everything they had behind, including jobs and other family members, to live in the hospital in a foreign country anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months. Even through all of the change and stress this brought, they were still so gracious and thankful for everything. Talk about a reality check.

Participating within your community teaches lessons that you cannot gain in a classroom at school. The involvement is a humbling reminder that there is more to this world than you and your wants.

A college education acts as a bridge to success for the future. Nowadays, most employers will not consider an applicant without a college degree. In some situations, it does not even matter what that degree specializes in as long as you possess one. Despite the financial stability it can provide, a bachelor's degree goes beyond just the physical rewards of a job and a nice paycheck.

The experience of college is not always an easy one, but it is rewarding. One of the most important rewards is the growing up that happens while away at college. Most students move out of their parents' houses to live on their own. This brings on a newfound set of responsibilities. You are forced to learn how to manage your time and money. While most parents still help out financially with schooling expenses, a student is now responsible financially for more than he was in high school. Time management is also better learned and grasped while taking a full course load and maintaining a part time job. This especially applies to me. Taking seventeen course hours a week while also putting in twenty hours of work in a week requires appropriate time management to succeed. It is tough, but it is rewarding.

Apart from time and financial management, a college student is exposed to a diverse set of people all containing different backgrounds and beliefs. Students moving from a small town to a university might experience culture shock in their beginning time there. This is a good thing. Being around and learning to work with such diversity sets students up for success in the future. An employee can be most profitable in the workplace when able to work with anyone. A student will also gain access to numerous resources and networks that cannot be found elsewhere. This can come in handy when searching for internships and job opportunities.

A college degree reaps great benefits, both physical and developmental, that cannot be easily accessed elsewhere. From possessing future financial stability and learning key life lessons, college is an important adventure to be partake in. The experience can be very costly, but the reward is worth it.