

### A Change of Perspective On Libraries

The library is a study place, a social gathering, and a research field for me. It has become the main contributor to bettering my education, as well as expanding my social life and connection to community through volunteer activities. But it hasn't always been that way. Reading was never a pleasurable experience when I was younger. No matter what my parents tried, without fail, I would end up in tears. My family put more emphasis on other activities such as sports and hands on learning. We did not spend a lot of time in the library. Reading had become such a dark, painful experience that when we did visit the library, I found it dull and stressful. However, the library eventually helped me overcome my anxiety toward reading when I was introduced to the animal books in the children's section. It became my goal to read all of the animal books on the second floor. I never finished; however, I learned more about animals and how to read in a few years than ever before.

When I entered middle school, I was given more books to read and assignments to finish. That was when the library became even more useful. As a homeschooler, the library was my family's main source for these resources. I got my first library card and began to enjoy visiting the library and checking out books. The upper floor of the library holds many memories of middle school projects and papers. Science projects on earthquakes and precipitation were researched with my sister at squeaky tables by the window, presentations on careers and spices of animals, and children's novels read hurriedly for the quiz the next day. Many other homeschool families and homeschool co-ops used the same library, so it became a meeting place. On almost every occasion we visited the library, a classmate could be found wondering around the shelves. After

bumping into one another among the maze of books, we would sit around, looking over some books, always with pictures.

It should be a fundamental right to have access to knowledge. The library provides this. However, the library does more than store books and provide computer access. It is an organization focused on nurturing the individual mind as well as the community, as I found out when I entered high school. Through online homeschool resources, I learned about the Teen Advisory Council, a volunteer group devoted to expanding the function of the library to teens. After attending several meetings headed by Molly Collins, the library's Teen's Librarian, I decided to attend some other volunteer opportunities. Signing up online, I found that there was a whole host of clubs and activities at libraries in my community, including art clubs, computer courses, presentation courses, college planning courses, gaming clubs, board game nights, cultural explorations, movie nights, professional development workshops, tutoring programs, Spanish clubs, and English clubs. This broad list of opportunities to connect with other individuals in my community was extremely exciting. I am now a Teen Tutor at North County Regional Library and regularly attend Community Service Sundays. This changed my perspective on libraries from simply a study area, to a place to grow and connect with my community.

Only recently have I come to fully appreciate what a library can bring to the table. On the surface a library may seem like just a big, sometimes scary building, storing large numbers of books. However, a library means much more than that. It means jobs, equal rights to education, and community. It is a quiet place to study, a safe place to gather, and a helpful place for bettering the community all around.