

## **Edward Hall, 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Homeschooler**

For as long as I can remember I've been going to libraries. I grew up going to the Central Branch of the Greensboro Public Library, and picking out dozens of 'Magic Treehouse' and 'A to Z Mysteries' books. I'd take them home and spend hours on end just reading and through the years as my many interests in literature have grown, the library has always had something to satisfy my many curiosities. I've always loved literature in all of its forms, be it reading or writing it. The library has given me access to many resources (i.e. books) to continue my love of literature.

For years the library was just a place to check out a book or movie or CD but these past five years have shown me the library is so much more than that. In March of 2011 I began volunteering at the Hemphill Branch Library and my experience there has opened my eyes to all the things libraries have to offer.

Once you walk through the doors of a library, you walk into a community; a place where people greet you with a friendly smile and a place where someone knows your name. In the beginning of my time at the Hemphill Branch Library, I started in the children's room shelving and straightening books. I quickly moved onto Adult Fiction then nonfiction, and now I do everything. No matter what I do, I give it my all, my 110%, and I was always looking for new opportunities. I was given the task of facilitating the weekly Construction Workshop as well as assisting with the weekly StudioPlus. This gave me much experience with working with children, and even though they're young, children have many stories to tell.

In the spring of 2013, I was presented with the opportunity to speak in front of the Greensboro City Council, to speak about my experiences as a volunteer at the library. It was an amazing experience, though I did get a little nervous under the lights and in front of such high and respected people.

In the spring of the following year, I was asked to speak in front of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners on behalf of the library. After the speech I gave their, I was asked by the president of the Friends of the Greensboro Public Library to join the board, and in that fall I was voted onto the board. These are just a few examples of how libraries have impacted me personally. I am still extremely grateful for all these opportunities granted to me.

This is also part of the reason libraries are important to me and why I hold them dear to my heart. Because it's shown me a library isn't just a place where you go to check out a book or use the computer, it's a place for people of all ages, races, and backgrounds to interact, and discover a bond between themselves, the other patrons of the library and the library staff itself. I've seen the librarians build a family-like bond with patrons as well as with fellow staff, because when you get down to it, a library is just one big family, made up of other families.

Libraries are important for us all, because they connect us, be it with a good book or an old favorite, a new friend or just information. It gives opportunity and the Hemphill Branch, I can say from experience is the center of our community. Kids, teens, and adults come in everyday from across the street or from across town to come and use the resources the library has to offer.

Libraries have thousands of stories to offer any bookworm out there, but they also have the one thing needed nowadays to keep us connected, be it with friends or current events. They have internet access and not everyone has access to this at home, and there have been many people I've seen come to the library just to use a computer. This is another way libraries build, connect and help libraries.

Why are libraries important for the future? Because libraries are communities and these communities build and help individuals. They provide their communities with what it needs.

And to close, I'd like to share a poem I wrote about libraries called "The Shore".

The Shore.

Upon the shore  
I look out to sea  
To see if I could see anything  
And beneath its crystal surface  
I saw a thousand shells  
Each different  
Each having its own tale to tell

I grab as many I can  
Fit within my hand  
Hundreds filled with thousands of words  
And I want to know  
I want to hear what has to be heard

I sit down and listen to the different stories  
Of the loves and of the glories  
Of the riches and of the rags  
All these stories I never knew I could have

I take them home  
And listen through the endless nights  
Of tales from the land of Fantastica  
To stories about the catcher in the rye

I return to the shore  
And into the waters I dive

Ready to explore distant lands  
I dive into the waters  
Ready to explore again

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Go to your local library soon, check out a book or movie or just sit down and read, but I guarantee you when you go, you will see the community it really is.