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Grade 10

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## The Life in Libraries

As I think back throughout my life, even some of my earliest memories involve the library in some way. I remember scampering to the library with my mother after finishing a book. I would cheerfully run over to my favorite librarian who would greet me with a smile and show me some children's books, which would soon become some of my favorites, like "Judy Moody" and "The Chronicles of Narnia". But whether it be learning to read, using the computer, researching for a project, or developing new hobbies or skills, the library provided me with every resource I ever needed.

As I got older, I began to become more deeply involved with the library, wishing to be a part of something that has already had such a great impact in my life. In 9th grade, I started volunteering at the Mooresville Public Library, investing my time and energy into making the library a place where more and more people come together to celebrate literature and the stories the library has to tell. So far, I have offered nearly four hundred hours of my time to my library, and am committed to giving more in the future. Each and every one of my visits opens my eyes to something new that the library has to offer, from services to events to programs for people of all ages. I started out shelving books in the "teen" area and dusting the shelves, then later on began to be given more responsibilities like recycling, making flyers, setting up for events, and even substituting for staff at the reference desk in the library.

Seeing that I had been spending much of my time volunteering at the library, the Young Adults Advisor, Ms. Vanessa Campbell, invited me to take the Volunteer Coordinator position of Teen Advisory Board. I was thrilled at the thought of this new opportunity for me to share my ideas and interests with other teens who also wanted to serve the library. On the first meeting day of the Board, I was greeted with many new faces, some of whom I knew from school, and some I met for the first time. However, throughout these last two years as a member of the Teen Advisory Board, I have grown closer with all of these people in some way or another.

The Teen Advisory Board hosted a multitude of events throughout my time there, including a book club and an annual Polar Express event, as ways for children and teens to develop an interest for books. Another yearly program the Teen Advisory Board is part of is the Summer Reading program for which we help plan and advertise. We also participate in or organize events that aren't related to the library as much, such as Adopt-a-Highway clean-ups, the Martin Luther King March, and the Habitat for Humanity "Restore" program, all of which helped us reach out past the library and connect more with the community at large.

As Volunteer Coordinator, my job is to help other teens start their own journey of discovering the library, or help them give back in one way or another. I train them to volunteer and help find ways in which they can make their own interests and voice be heard. In addition to leading the teen volunteer chapter of the library, I also help plan volunteer activities for teens to participate in. So far, these activities have attracted many new people to the library, whose involvement spreads the word about the library and its many resources.

In addition to volunteering and being a member of the Teen Advisory Board, I also tutor at the library to raise the confidence of children and make them and their parents proud of their work. Doing this at the Mooresville Public Library gives me access to all the resources it had to offer such as the study rooms, math books, computers, and supplies. The library also helps many children focus much better than they would at home or at school, where multiple distractions take their focus away from the task on hand. One of the children I tutor used to be quiet and introverted when we started just about a month ago. She has already gotten much better on math and writing, and now talks more, and even laughs. Overall, my tutee seems much more engaged in learning since we started, and I believe this is because of the safe and calm environment that the library provides. I also think her confidence has increased because of the interactions she has there, with different types of people like librarians and staff, other children, and teens like me.

Libraries are essential to all of us, and whether it be simply gaining knowledge from reading or using the computer, the library itself acts like a safe haven for most of the people that go there. The library is a place where you can forget about reality and be present in the moment, where you can meet new people and develop new interests through the diverse programs it

offers. It even provides internet access for people who do not have that luxury in their own homes. Furthermore, the future of North Carolina depends on libraries, because they connect people in a way that no other place does, supplying readers of all backgrounds, ages, and interests with a community that is diverse and supportive.

To conclude, I would like to share a poem I wrote about libraries called “Celebrating Stories”:

While strolling around  
On a cold winter day  
I came upon a building  
With a book on display

I stumbled right in  
To take a quick look  
And not knowing why  
I picked up the book

I traced my finger  
Along its textured spine  
And I opened the book  
That told the story of time

As I ripped through the pages  
With a gleam in my eye,  
I found a world of tales  
And made it mine



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