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Cary Community Library impacted me in a way I didn't think anything could. From offering a community full of helpful peers, the kindest and most rewarding librarians, and a colorful variety of literature, my public library gave me a place from where I could exert an influence in my home and community.

Walking into a library for me is like walking into my next adventure. I can get lost in my books, forget what's been happening at school, forget the hardships I'm facing in my life for the amount of time that I'm here. You can be a shadowhunter warrior from Cassandra Clare's books, battling demons, or a demigod from Riordans, fighting monsters... You're not just an average 9th grader, trying to succeed anymore. You are succeeding already in these stories.

I've always been a bookworm. From my first book, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See?", which I memorized and could read upside down, to the novels of today. When I was younger, kids used to tease me for it. "Why are you reading when you could be playing instead?" they would ask. They couldn't seem to grasp the concept that I actually liked reading, and didn't think of it as a chore. Every night as homework from school, we had to read for 20 minutes.. The other kids would moan and complain but I was actually not allowed to read, because I was already reading for so much of the day and refused to do anything else. When I misbehaved, my books were actually taken away as punishment.

I love having the ability to just go someplace and check out a book. My parents keep telling me, back in their day, that wasn't always an option for them. I feel like libraries play a crucial part in our growth and development in all ages. They hold a vast expanse of knowledge that we can take as much from it as we may need or want as long as we have the drive to do so. I've learned many lessons from the books I have read through the library. Sure, I've had my fair share of learning experiences in real life, but many story morals have impacted many of my life choices. If characters show compassion, or perseverance in a specific decision, I can analyze that and come to the

realization of how they made that choice, and then if needed, I can utilize that in specific circumstances in my life.

Books allow us to expand our mind, but it doesn't stop there. Books can take you places you never thought you could go, and show us things you couldn't even possibly imagine. You could be in Egypt or in Ancient Greece, the past or future, living out the worlds others have imagined for you. So many people don't have the same opportunity as us, and I'm glad i have the privilege of library access.

When I had just started middle school, I started volunteering at my public library. I worked in an arts and crafts program, I was in a program that specialized in cleaning up the library, but my favorite was learning with legos. This was a program where kids from k-5 grades could come in and play with legos, meet new friends, and take a break. I helped introduce story time, and these kids taught me so many other traits that I couldn't have learned elsewhere. My library started showing kids from an early age how much fun learning and reading is, and I think that's amazing because many kids grow up thinking of the stereotype that libraries are boring and meant for nerds. But that's not true, and these kids know it. These kids are the future of NC, and I think libraries play a big part in influencing them. I would want all future generations to have the same opportunities that i was given.

Many people dismiss the need for libraries in today's day and age. We have computers, and phones, and google to do the work for us. But there are so many other resources that libraries offer that you can't get anywhere else like free programs and Services, as well as opportunities for young adults to have a chance to help out their community and make a difference. We have hard copy resources as well as electronic devices meant for in-library use, and programs offering a variety of activities for kids just like me. The library was also a way for me to connect with others in my area, as I made new friends in many of the programs I participated in, like TLC. The library also provided a calm and enriched environment for people of all ages who needed a place to work or study, or just have a place to sit down and read.

Libraries have impacted me and my classmates because actually, in my school I

already have a public library, the Athens Drive Public Library. This is so important to us because especially in a high school, that can make our school life a lot easier. We go to the library during lunch because it offers a quiet environment to talk if you just want to catch up with no interruptions, or if you have a last minute printing job, you have to finish up a project on one of the computers, or check out a book for one of your classes. I really don't know where I'd be without my public library.

Here is a poem I included about libraries; please enjoy!!

On the banks of creativity float boats;  
Filled to the brim  
with the whimsical whims  
Of dreamers just like us.

The sails are made of hope,  
And the oars, of belief  
Sail for a while and you may find  
How much there is to see.

There's a treasure map onboard,  
And its bounty holds a strange allure;  
For it shows not diamonds, or rubies or gold  
But simple, meaningful, words

These words strung together  
Create a magic of their own,  
Between creatures and characters from faraway lands,  
You'll never be alone.

And deep in the billows  
Of the rocky tide and sea,  
Fed by a wish, swim magical fish,  
Ready to set our minds free.

And on board our mystical boats,  
We catch and keep these fish of fantasy.  
We get inspiration for new tales of elation,  
Given to us by our very own public libraries:)