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### Municipal Scholarship: Civics and Me

Engaging in active membership and taking on leadership roles in my dedications facilitated growth in overcoming challenges, college readiness, and giving back to my community especially. As I take on the next step in my education as a computer science major, I have found that the ability to diversify myself in the job market, through skills earned from Honor Societies, clubs, and independent volunteer initiatives remains crucial to my success. By elevating organizations through volunteerism, I embraced the community found in civics and academics.

I first experienced the importance of community service by becoming an active teaching assistant at the Level Up Black Belt Academy in Boothwyn, Pennsylvania. At ten years old, I tied my black belt around my waist, a commitment to serving my health, instructors, and community. From the ages of seven to fourteen, martial arts opened windows that enlightened me in the power of civic engagement. Dedicating to a high contact sport put me in a vulnerable sink or swim position, in which I looked up to my mentors to guide me. I started training at seven to know that in the event of an attack, I could protect myself, yet I found that leading beginner students brought me accomplishment.

As my skills heightened by training for hours a day and competing statewide, I found a new outlet to further my education by assisting martial arts classes. Once I excelled through a year of training, I ventured into teaching classes nearly six times a week for the following five years. It started out as sharing my perspective on different techniques to the lower ranks, but soon became an intense hobby as I watched hundreds of students devote to the art and earn black

belts for themselves. The impact of not only teaching a student how to defend themselves, but also how to persevere through mental blocks radiated through me when I saw my students never give up.

From that point on, service became a norm to me that I continued to uphold throughout high school because I enjoyed seeing how my efforts improved my community. An early promise that I made to myself was to always remember my roots. When I attended Hilltop Elementary School, I remember looking up the highschoolers that volunteered at our annual field day, and I vowed to return the favor by becoming one of the high schoolers that took the time to give back to their elementary school. Since my freshman year, I have gone to Boothwyn, Linwood, Marcus Hook, and Hilltop to paint students' faces, and hopefully inspire the youth to keep the field day traditions alive. I remember thinking about how far away high school seemed when I was in the shoes of the elementary schoolers, and how different and mature the older students seemed in comparison to me. It truly meant something to me that someone older would take time out of their busy schedule to spend time with us and I hope I created the same memories for the kids.

In the same way, as an aspiring computer scientist, I am the proud secretary of the Computer Science Honor Society, and the program offers a similar opportunity. I still remember being in fourth grade, getting ready for my first graduation to the middle school, and my teacher, Mr. making every student promise to come back and visit the class at least once. With every intent to keep my promise, I was able to visit my old class and introduce computer science to the students. I believe that I started learning computer science far too late in life, during my junior year, so I found a way to satisfy this problem. I was able to show students how code works through simple games, which would have been very beneficial to me. I believe that many of our

youth are unaware of the possibilities available to them outside of common jobs. By showing students the world of opportunities in the job market, I can look back and say that I could have influenced or prepared at least one student to explore a new route, which is all that matters at the end of the day.

Outside of school, one of the causes that I have resonated with the most is promoting research and funding towards Multiple Sclerosis. My whole life, my very close aunt, has suffered from MS. I have seen the mental and physical toll it has taken on her and I have been committed to finding ways to prevent MS from taking away from daily lives. Multiple sclerosis is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes the immune system to destroy the protective covering of nerve fibers, myelin, affecting the electrical signals in the brain. I have seen this disease cause my aunt to deteriorate over the years, causing numb limbs, muscle weakness, and difficulty walking. For this reason, I decided to volunteer to be a leader during a Run for MS event, in which I helped organize the event. I was able to bring my aunt with me to allow her to share her story and spread awareness. These events through the National MS Society raise money through participant fundraising, corporate sponsorships, and donations, which goes towards research, services, and advocacy.

Community service has brought me closer to all parts of my community. Through shared experiences, giving back to the people I love, and passing teachings down, community service has influenced every era of my life. Whether efforts are big or small, the important part of service is that at least one person feels the beneficial effects, even if that person is yourself at times. By promoting a positive community, the community grows a little bit through each act.