



Girls Gone Great Essay

by Jessica Cottrell, 2008 Winner

It was very hard for me to choose between the two essay questions for this contest because my answers for the second question would be the examples I would be giving for the first question. It is my opinion that making a difference in your community is the best way to create a balanced team oriented world.

I have been fortunate to be involved with Amnesty International in school and that has opened my eyes to people's struggles in the world and the huge value of some of the basic rights we take for granted here in America. While volunteering in this group we have worked to make change and promote awareness of struggles outside of our own country. We have raised money to help Darfur Refugees in danger of Genocide and sent holiday notes to those needing hope just to mention a few. We are one small group in one average school in America but we are making a difference.

This past summer I was thrilled to be a part of the team that my church sent through World Changers to Durham, North Carolina. We were there for a week and our goal was to put a new roof on the home of a woman who was hurting financially because of some unfortunate events. At the end of the trip we were able to present to this woman her new roof and she cried tears of joy and heartfelt thanks. We were one small group in one small church in America but we made a difference.

I have volunteered with SADD, Students Against Drunk Drivers, have helped collect toys for my Aunts fundraiser for Make A WISH, collected goodie packages for service men and several other wonderful groups who are making a difference in communities every day. With each volunteer experience, I am constantly reminded that giving of time whether it is one week, one day or one hour out of our own lives to give something to others makes an incredible, impacting difference.

There are an estimated 300 + million people in the United States so if even ½ of that amount, (150 million) would donate 1 hour per week to help others that would be 150 MILLION hours of volunteer work and that is just in America. A donation of time like that would have a huge impact on not only the areas of need but on the building of teams and friendships of people that otherwise might never cross paths. One small person with one small hour for one small act of kindness can make an incredible difference.

It is my goal as a photographer to hopefully publish an emotionally moving photo based magazine to celebrate and promote volunteerism throughout the world. It will highlight people of all ages, races and genders working together as they give of themselves to make this world a better place. The magazine will depict the message; it does not matter if it is Refugees in Sudan or a woman in North Carolina but that we are all deep down in the same community and it is through giving of our selves in our community that we can all live in a balanced world that works for all of us.