

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.” - Author unknown

Essay by **Presley Allen** – Augusta Raa Middle School

The quote above is a statement that represents the way a person can make a difference in their community. What the author is trying to their audience is that by volunteering, people can choose how they want to see their society improve or change. People of all ages can volunteer for the better of their community, so it is important that we as citizens understand that we can always have a say in how we want the world to be.

As a volunteer myself, I can say that it really does make a difference on how you want to change things around you. Last semester at my school, I decided to become a Unified Partner in my school’s Special Olympics program. This program was started by Eunice Shriver in 1968 to help include children with special needs in athletic activities and to make friends with others to help increase their social skills. It has helped me see that in my community, I want to see everyone be accepted for who they are. To help further achieve this idea of equality, I also work with my dance studio’s (Sharon Davis School of Dance) special needs dance class. This class is a more one-on-one dancing partnership that helps people of all ages understand that they are capable of anything! By volunteering with these programs I am voting to see a growth in the community’s idea of acceptance. I can vote every day in or democracy by choosing to work with and accept others.

Along with working with these programs, I also volunteer with Canopy Oaks Elementary school’s teachers during the summer. With teachers I help them organize their rooms, make hundreds of die cuts, and build their class web-sites. I usually try to help out older-aged teachers, or new teachers because I can tell that it means so much to them to either be helped or feel welcomed. I try to spread the message of kindness by volunteering with these teachers during the summer because I feel that sometimes teens could learn to be a bit more selfless. In my community I am choosing to make people feel welcomed and relieved to have someone’s help so that others can maybe radiate kindness from one person to another to make the people feel more comfortable with others.

In conclusion, by volunteering I am able to vote on how I want to see a change in my community. By volunteering you are able to work in organizations that have the same motives that you want to see grow around you. Although there is no literal ballot, people of all ages can vote to do what’s best for their community and see their town grow.