

Book Boxes to Help the Lakewood Community
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gkj058

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1. CAS Project Essay

One thing I have also valued, and tried to keep at the center of my life, is helping and assisting others. It started in first grade when I joined the Cub Scouts, and later advanced into Boy Scouts. The Boy Scout slogan is “do a good turn daily” which means help someone out everyday. Also, through boy scouts I have done hundreds of hours of service. But it extends even further than that. At school when I see someone struggling to carry all of their books, or someone is struggling to finish a homework or understand a concept, I try to help them out. Even in the future, I want to go into medicine because it is a profession I view as very helpful for others. It is just something I have always valued.

This desire to help others is paralleled by one of the goals of the CAS Project. According to the CAS Subject Brief, one goal of the CAS project is to understand that we all have responsibilities toward each other in our community. For my CAS Project, me and my friend felt the responsibility to make sure everyone had access to books, whether it be for entertainment or for education. That’s why we were inspired to build free libraries, so that people in the Lakewood community could get constant access to books, and could keep them as long as they wanted.

The main challenge was trying to set up times to meet, not only with each other, but also with stores and libraries. Everything was so spread apart that it was hard to pick up donations or meet with people about the project, especially since I didn’t yet have my license. Another challenge was the pure freedom of it. We were given so much free range that trying to get started was a little overwhelming. Luckily I had already developed skills to plan, prepare and carry out a project when I did my eagle project two summers ago, cause if not it would have been even harder to complete this CAS project.

If I were to do this again, I think I would’ve gotten more building of the book boxes done in the summer when it was warmer. Having to try and cut the wood for the boxes in the garage (in order to stay out of the cold) during the winter created a huge mess. Also, in order to stain the boxes, I had to first lay out sheets over the whole garage, which took a while. Also, I could not park in the garage during the process of building them.

Hopefully my project will have a positive impact on the people in the Lakewood community. I would like it to provide an opportunity to read and learn for anyone who lives far away from a library with no easy way to get there, or can’t afford to be buying new books, or really just anyone who wants something new to read. Already I think it has been a growing experience for me and Tommy. We have both needed to step outside of our comfort zone and do things we would not have done otherwise.

2. EXPERIENCES



How will you work collaboratively with others in your project?

For CAS, it will be important to be able to work and collaborate with others. Especially since I am working with a partner, staying on the same page, distributing the workload, and working together will be very important parts. We will have to work together to distribute fliers, raise awareness and build the boxes. If we don't collaborate, the service project will have no chance of success.

This past weekend the rowing team attended the Midwest Rowing Championship. A key part of rowing is working together as one boat to accomplish a goal, similarly to with the CAS project. In the semi-finals, we barely squeaked in, placing sixth out of six qualifiers. The problem was that people were not together during the stroke, placing the blade in the water, and pushing the blade out at different times. This caused the boat to be very un-set and rocky, making it harder

to row. It also made the boat slower because people were keeping their blades in the water too long, stopping the flow of the boat.

The next day in the final, we were able to dramatically decrease our time, getting second overall, and qualifying for nationals. The only thing that changed is that we stayed more together with our stroke. Instead of rowing at our own pace, we locked in and pushed together. This was much more efficient, as it minimized the amount of work we had to do, since we were just keeping the boat moving instead of trying to push it through the water.

Explain your leadership role for this project such as planning and initiating activities?

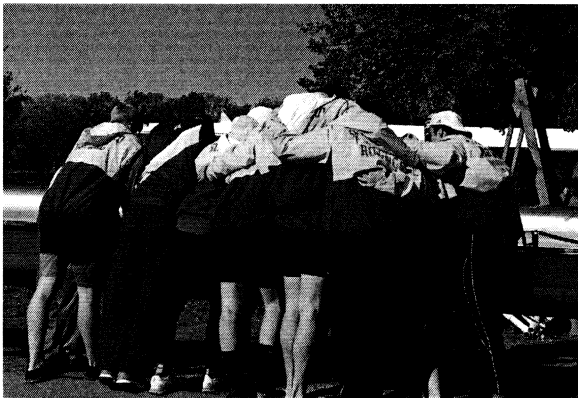
For our project, it will mostly be just me and Tommy working together. However, when we are building the boxes, we will be getting help from our friends. When that happens, it is important that we are able to efficiently manage and oversee the work that is getting done.



I do have some experience in a role of leadership. I am a Boy Scout in Troop 701 out of Strongsville. In the troop, I hold the position of Troop Guide. The role of the Troop Guide is to lead all of the incoming scouts and introduce them to what scouting is all about. Along with Josh, the other Troop Guide, we are in charge of about 20 kids a year (we've been doing it for two years).

We are basically in full control of their first year of scouting. We make the lessons plans for what to teach them at meetings, and then we teach them at meetings. We are in charge of helping them advance, and we lead them at camps (that's when we have the most impact). In fact, I just got back from our Summer Camp last Saturday.

At this camp, we had to lead them to all of their merit badge classes. We also had to help them cook meals and clean up. We taught them other important scouting skills as well, such as how to build a fire and how to whittle. Overall, it was a very successful week, with all of the kids getting both of their merit badges.



What new challenges and skills are you undertaking by conducting your project?

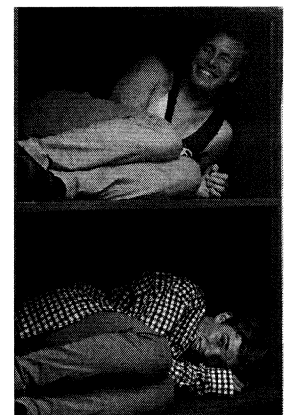
As I mentioned in one of my earlier journals, I had to learn new tactics in order to get over my shyness. Something similar to this happened in rowing last year as well.

Last season we had a switching of coaches. With the first coach he emphasized holding the forward body angle through the first part of the drive. He didn't want us to start opening our bodies, or leaning back, until our legs were three-quarters of the way pushed down. He taught us this way because he didn't want us trying to crank with our backs too much cause that could lead to injury. Eventually this way got ingrained in my brain.

When our new coach came, he was a fan of opening up the bodies up at the beginning of the stroke. So, as soon as we start pushing with our legs, he wants us to start leaning back so that by the time we finish pushing, we will be fully leaned back. At first this adjustment was very hard to adjust to because I was used to doing it the same way for so long. Eventually, once I was able to adjust, I was able to start improving again, and was able to move back toward the top of the rankings.

Explain your leadership role for this project such as planning and initiating activities?

Today I helped out with a Learn-to-Row camp for 7th and 8th graders (I believe) from LCA, Lakewood Catholic Academy. My job was to, along with fellow student Jack Brancatelli, lead a group of nine kids around to stations. In the morning, the stations were: The Physics of Rowing, The History of Cleveland, Leadership Skills and The Ecology of the River. At each station Jack and I would make sure the kids were focused up and

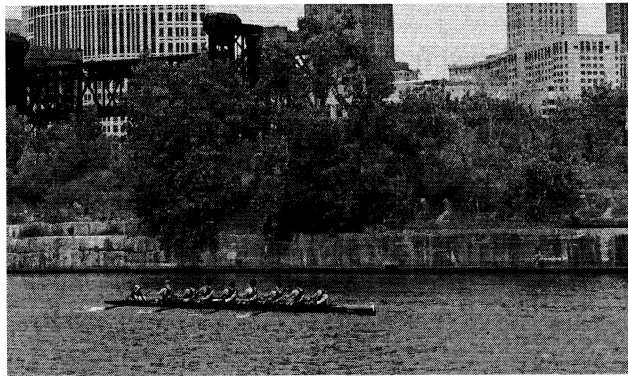


paying attention. Then we went to lunch where I did not really have any leadership responsibilities. Then after lunch I did the same thing, just at new stations. In the afternoon the stations were: River Tour, Sailing Knots and Learn to Row. The point where my leadership made the biggest impact was safely leading all of the kids across the busy streets. I really enjoyed the camp, and from the feedback I received, the kids did as well.

How will you work collaboratively with others in your project?

During the CAS project, working together is very integral to the process. I rowing, working together is also very important. You need to row together as a boat, with everyone in sync.

In the past week of practice, the 2nd Varsity 8+ and the 1st Varsity 8+ have been a lot closer than they should have. In fact, on multiple pieces, the 2V8 has actually beaten the V8. Now if you just look at the numbers, the V8 should be faster. The majority of the fastest erg (rowing machine) times are in the V8. Another important thing in rowing is watts per kilogram



(power compared to weight). The people in the V8 also lead the team in watts per kilogram. So on paper, they should be winning.

However, the 2V has been winning because they have been working together as a team. Rowing is one of the biggest team sports there is. The better a boat rows together, the faster it goes. The 2V has shown this by beating the 1V everyday, even though the 1V should be faster. Today, though, the V8 has finally started to row together and we crushed the

2V8.

How will you overcome possible obstacles for your project?

Recently in school, the workload has picked up a lot. As a result of the increased workload, I have been getting a lot less sleep. Now, I don't get to bed until anywhere from midnight to two in the morning. This would not be too much of a problem if I were just waking up and going straight to school in the morning, but I have rowing practice before school. In order to make it on time to rowing practice, I have to wake up at 4 a.m.

In the past, waking up at 4 am wasn't a problem because I could just sleep in the car. However, now I have to drive myself to practice. I have not been driving long though, so I am really not good at driving on low sleep. In fact, I have almost fallen asleep several



times behind the wheel, and fallen asleep for a hot second a couple times.

This fatigue while driving has put my life, as well as other driver's lives at danger. It has also caused me to not be able to make it to practice sometimes, as I have seen it unfit for me to continue driving. This has also led to me losing a spot in the top boat. I have had to learn how to try and stay more alert while driving. Some techniques I have used are singing along to the radio, cracking the window a bit and sitting the chair up more.

How will you overcome possible obstacles for your project?

While completing my project, I had to branch out more and talk to more people, something I have not been very comfortable doing in the past. I had to talk to more people in order to get donations to pay for the wood and in order to get book donations.

I have also had to face a pretty big obstacle so far this year with missing so many days of school. From kindergarten through tenth grade I only missed two days of school. They were the Thursday and Friday before winter break, in third grade, because my family went on vacation to Disney World. Outside of that, the only thing I ever missed school for was school events (regattas, retreats, etc.).

This year I have already missed over a combined two weeks of school between a retreat, three field trips, two rowing camps, the official grand-opening of the foundry, college interviews

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therealkenehan so i've got a fever of 103 and i had to get chest x-rays cause the doctor thinks i have pneumonia and i am so freaking exhausted and dead but i was hoping to catch up on homework this weekend cause i've missed like 5 days in the past two school weeks (plus break) also i woke up at like 8 and i thought it was sunday morning and i had a panic attack cause i didn't do membean but i got it done because apparently THE GRIND STOPS FOR NOTHING and i have had 26 new words in the past three sessions, so if that sounds fair to you, it's not and honestly i can't think of the last time i felt this miserable plus my life is just like falling apart in front of me i mean i'm prolly gonna fail every class this year (except chinese) i'm fact the only two bright spots in my life are chinese and the cavs and i've only smiled twice in the past 2 days, once when my brother made a joke and once when lebron did a little dance after icing the game so if i'm gonna die from this sickness, i might as well commit and just end it all now cause i mean i spent like half an hour earlier just crying because i'm a mess (and i'm not a big crier, i usually only cry happy tears)

and sick days. The amount of days I've missed this year is more than I have missed in my last twelve years COMBINED.

Missing all of these days has led to me having a lot of makeup work to do. I've never been in a position before where I had so much work to make up. The worst part is that I got sick right before break, so all of the homework that teachers assigned over thanksgiving break, thinking that we all had 11 days to complete it, is piling up like a mountain.

Currently, I have actually not been able to overcome this obstacle, and am still working at it. My hope is to get everything done and caught up before the start of finals.

How will you overcome possible obstacles for your project?

In our CAS project, there were obviously a lot of obstacles to get it completed. Anything worth working for will not be easy. There was no exception when completing our year-long service project. We faced the obstacles of living 30

minutes apart, high expenses that we had to raise money for and so on.

But our service project isn't the only time I've faced obstacles. I repeatedly am facing the same obstacle currently when it comes to college applications. One of the big parts of college and scholarships is writing essays. The problem is that I have never been a great essay writer. An essay that should take a half hour to write could take me up to two just to reach the required level. Along with that, I find essay writing very boring to write essays, and can get distracted quite easily. This drags the process out even longer, so that what should have taken only a half an hour has now taken three hours.

I've found different methods that have seemed to be pretty effective in order to combat all of this. When I start writing something, I usually start with some basic outline or quick notes. From there I expand out on each of these details and then make it flow. Also, I will often have someone sitting over me or at least be somewhere nearby so they can keep me honest and focused.



How will you overcome possible obstacles for your project?

One obstacle I constantly have to overcome is being shy and socially awkward. I especially had to deal with this weekend when I went to the All-School Dance (ASD) at Magnificat High School.

At ASD, I went with a girl I had not seen in two years, so I was nervous that it would be awkward, and that I wouldn't know what to say. I was also worried that either one of us might have changed enough that we weren't the same people we were when we were friends. Nonetheless, I was almost dreading going because I was afraid to interact with someone for the first time after so long.

Another problem was that my group was made up of ten people: me, my date and eight girls I have never met before in my life. It is bad enough I had to try and make friends with eight people, but they were eight people I knew nothing about, and they were girls.

I was able to avoid any awkward situations by talking to my date most of the time and then really only responding to what the



other girls were saying, instead of initiating conversation with them.

3. EVIDENCE

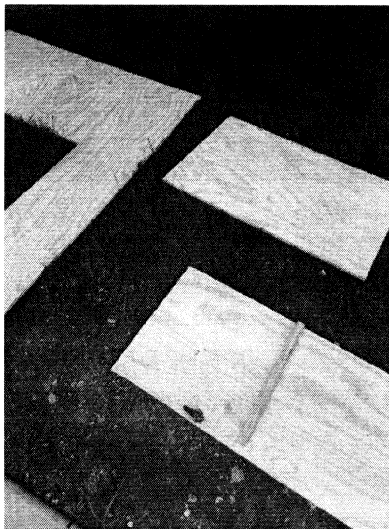
What are some of your strengths? What areas of personal growth do you think you will gain from doing your CAS project?

This CAS project will require me to step out of my comfort zone. I will have to interact and work with many people I don't know, mostly people older than me, which is hard to do for a shy person. In order to grow as a more confident speaker and "businessman" I need to be more outgoing and direct when I am contacting people.



In order to do that I have already started to contact people about possibly placing a book bank on their property. I have sent an email to Strongsville High School, explaining who I am, what the project is, and how I think this project will be a benefit for their school community. The next step will be to actually meet with people at the high school and discuss a plan of action.

This also means I will have to stay on task and on top of things, as well as manage my time properly. I have a bad habit of procrastinating, so I will need to try to prevent myself from going into that mode. If I procrastinate there is no way I will be able to complete this project, because there is just way too much to do, and it is all a big, long process.



How will you overcome possible obstacles for your project?

I have never been very good at interacting with people I don't know. I have always been a very shy and reserved person. Going up and talking to people, especially when requesting something from them, has always been a struggle for me. And that goes for people of all ages. For our service project, though, we had to go up and ask a bunch of people for donations for our service project.

In order to not mess up, what I did was prepare what I was going to say before I went up to the librarians. I wrote out little talking points and keep up with a short speech/introduction. Right before I went into the library, I would go over the talk in my head. That way, when I had to actually talk to people, I knew what I was going to say, and didn't mess up because I was trying to make it up on the fly. I also brought in a letter explaining everything that I was saying so that I could give it to the librarian.

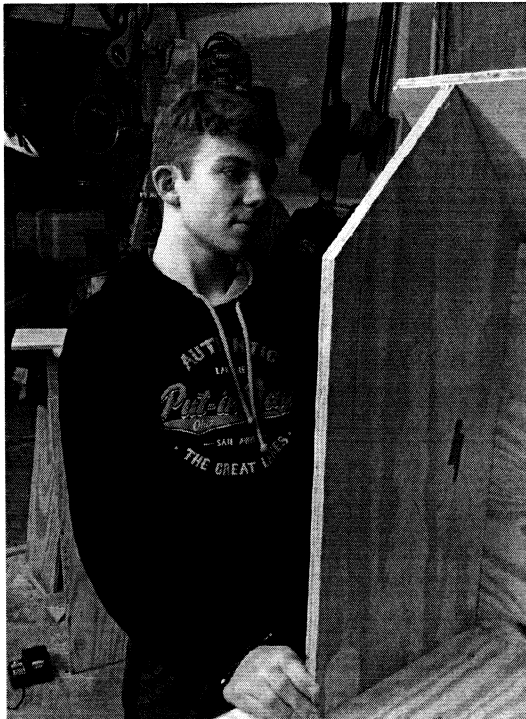
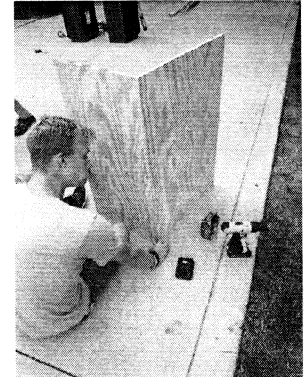
Explain your leadership role for this project such as planning and initiating activities?

This last time we met, Tommy and I started mapping out all of the times for the book drive. We compared our calendars so that we knew when we were both available, at what times would work best. That led to the conclusion that Saturday, July 1st, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

was the best time. We also decided that the Strongsville Rec Center would be a good place to conduct the book drive, since they had allowed similar fundraisers there in the past.

Next we decided on a date to pass out flyers in order to raise awareness for the book drive. We realized that we would probably need to do this about one week before the drive, that way people had enough time to gather up books, without feeling rushed, but also so that it wasn't such a long time before the drive that people would forget about it. That's why we decided that one week before the drive, which would be Saturday, June 24th, was the best date to pass out flyers.

So, in just a couple hours, we were able to basically map out our entire book drive. We figured out how we will do it, as well as when we will do it, and where we will do it. We figured out when we will pass out the fliers and where the fliers will be distributed.



Are there any ethical concerns for your project? If so, how will you address them?

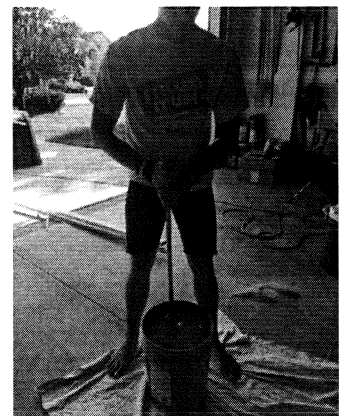
There are not really any ethical concerns with our service projects. The closest thing that we might have to an ethical concern is if people are stealing books (which in this case means taking books but not leaving one) from our free libraries, but even then, that's not a problem with our project, that's an ethical problem with the people taking the books. Even then, we have a backup plan in place. We talked to some of the libraries and they said that they would restock free libraries every once in awhile, and keep an eye on them for us.

The other somewhat "ethical problem" we might run into is if invasion of privacy. If we just place the free libraries randomly in Lakewood park, that would be borderline trespassing. We will have to clear with them exactly where we are putting the boxes so that we don't get into any trouble.

What area of global importance is your project impacting (local, national or international community)?

This project will have an impact on the local community. Specifically the community of Lakewood. It will target illiteracy and poverty in the community.

Illiteracy is a major problem. Some kids don't get to go to school, and some adults never had the chance. It's been proven that one of the best ways to learn is by reading. So, for all of those people



who don't have the best reading skills, or that didn't get the best education, they now have that opportunity available to them. Then, with more knowledge, maybe they'll have more opportunities out in the world.

Poverty is also another problem that is being targeted. Some people just don't have enough money to afford books, because they have so many other things they have to worry about, and aren't in the best financial situation. Well these free libraries now present an option to access books for them.

Also, just for anyone that wants a new book, or has books they don't want anymore, they can get a new book, and their old books can get recycled and used by others.

How will you work collaboratively with others in your project?

Obviously, for my project I had to work with my partner. But we also worked in cooperation with the libraries in order to get books to stock our libraries with. Many of the libraries we contacted were willing to donate us books to help our cause. In fact, the Lakewood



library even said they would check our free libraries periodically to restock them every few months and make sure there is always books in them.

In the end, between all of the libraries, we wound up with around 200 books. With 200 books, we had enough to completely fill all of the book boxes. Hopefully this will provide a wider range of genres for people planning on using the boxes. Also, it will hopefully increase the chance of them being successful, and there constantly being books in the free libraries.

4. Final Interview Reflection

Through this CAS project, I was able to improve my planning and preparation skills, as well as my leadership skills and my outgoingness. In terms of planning and preparation, I had to plan all of the steps ahead of time, and work out the details before I even got started. This is not something that can just be done all in one day. The order everything is done in, and even the time of the year it is done is important. After that, I then had to have the initiative to continually work. I had to have the insight to foresee possible events that could happen and understand the consequences of the choices I made at the beginning of the process. I was able to increase my leadership skills by organizing people who came to help with my project. I also had to promote my project so people would come to help me with it. There was a lot I had to take control of so that work actually got done. Finally, I believe I became more outgoing through this project. I was required to go up to store and library managers and ask for donations, whether it be materials or discounts. Interacting with people I didn't know was vital to the completion of my project.