

## **Andrew McCarty**

Ever since I was a small child, I've been involved in service projects. My parents were great role models and I began by volunteering with them. I remember thinking that whatever our efforts, they would only touch a small handful of people. I've since come to appreciate how a single initiative can impact many more lives than I ever imagined.

By my freshman year, I felt confident enough in my abilities to help organize such projects as a Turkey drive before Thanksgiving and a Holiday gift giving program. My largest undertaking thus far, however, has been my Boy Scout Eagle project. I decided to aid Lankenau Hospital in their annual collection and sale of used books to benefit their NICU (Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit). Over a period of several months, I accumulated over 1200 books. With the efforts of my scout troop, fellow students and their parents, I was able to see the success I envisioned materialize. Many local organizations also aided me in reaching my goal by allowing me to place drop off boxes at their offices. The response was overwhelming and the hospital raised over one thousand dollars. I've since been asked over the past three years to continue to volunteer for the NICU.

My commitment to community outreach has become a continued part of my life. Recently I helped my brother organize a winter coat drive for the Gaudenzia Organization. The Gaudenzia mission is to provide drug and alcohol treatment services to the Philadelphia area and the surrounding communities. During the cold winter months, most of us enjoy the luxury of owning warm coats. For others, they suffer through the season without protection from the elements. This collection brought not only warmth, but hope to those who struggle to purge addictions from their lives.

My mom and I continue to be involved in this organization. We are now in the midst of a new initiative we are calling, "Suited for Life". We are gathering business clothing for individuals who have come through the addiction recovery program so they can present themselves for a job interview. The purpose is to help them enter the next stage of their lives by building on their success at Gaudenzia and entering the work force. Our hope is that we'll play a small part in giving them a fresh start.

These are just a few of the service projects I have been involved in throughout my high school and middle school years. They have proved to me without a doubt, that a small group of individuals truly can touch the hearts of people in need and change their lives forever. Volunteering has

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also opened my life experiences far beyond the high school classroom. Giving to others has led me to a deeper appreciation of the simple things we can sometimes take for granted. I've also learned that those in the most need are not always living in far off places. They can often be found right in my own neighborhood.