

Brent Hillenbrand  
Conestoga

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead

Influencing the world is the dream of many, but change does not occur in the blink of an eye. No one can shape the globe, and an individual would be running a fool’s race trying to do so alone. By no means is it impossible for one person to begin a movement, but it takes time and the perseverance of many to make dreams realities. One person can make the initial difference, and through the help of others, that difference transforms into an incredible impact. Each movement begins with a small idea or a hunch housed and protected from critics who wish to brush it aside. Such protection can only be offered when people come together and, despite all odds, hope to create positive change. In that respect, I agree with Margaret Mead’s stance on changing the world.

Through my work in the community and association with small groups, I have learned about my true character. While writing a personal statement for a college application, I mentioned the role of community service in my life. After completing the essay, I realized that I have been moved much more than I ever could have imagined. Some of my service has involved chaperoning youth dances and working at craft fairs, but my deepest satisfaction in regard to community service has come while interacting with people who I know are positively affected by my efforts.

For example, I volunteered at a special needs basketball clinic during the summer after my sophomore year. The kids in the clinic had conditions that ranged from Down Syndrome to the rarest of ailments. By working with the kids, I realized that their lives are plagued by conditions that they did not ask for, but they do not let their conditions act as handicaps. They were not always worried if the ball went into the basket, but their

happiness was immeasurable when it did. The story of the clinic reflects the ideals of Margaret Mead in that it was begun by two parents who wanted to reserve gym time for their son and other children with special needs. Sometimes, the clinics were short on attendance. Nevertheless, they made an incredible impact on the kids. The gym served as a world in which they could forget about their disabilities and simply have a good time. I doubt that any of the kids remember me, but as long as I know that I was there those few days and was able to see them enjoying life in its purest form, I am satisfied.

To change the world would be incredible. To have honors upon honors is truly gratifying, but personally, I am content with the little things and the little groups that have helped positively shape the lives of others and myself.