

#1

"I made a difference . . ."
Lakewood High School PTSA
Scholarship Program
2011

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For as long as I can remember I have wanted to pursue a career in a field where I believe people make a difference every day - the field of education! Since my mom is a teacher, I have had the privilege of working in several classrooms; however, my most rewarding experiences occurred during the past two years when I had the opportunity to work with special needs students in two different capacities. In both of these experiences, I consistently felt like I was truly "Making a Difference."

When I was asked to be a student coach for Lakewood's Unified Athletic Program I felt very privileged and excited. Being a part of this program for one and a half years, I worked one-on-one and in small groups with students with various special needs including Autism, Aspergers, and Down Syndrome. As a student coach I was able to help these Lakewood Athletes improve their gross motor skills during activities such as basketball, rock climbing, bowling, and track. More importantly, I developed strong relationships with many of the student athletes in the Unified Program and helped them to develop other friendships as they became a part of the Lakewood Tiger Family. Through my work with the Unified Athletes, I believe I made a difference for them both with their athletic and social skills.

The skills that I learned through my work in Lakewood's Unified Program carried over into my second unique and rewarding opportunity. During this spring semester I have been working in the mornings one-on-one and in small groups with a young man in first grade at Hutchison Elementary School who has Down Syndrome. Helping him to develop his beginning reading and writing skills has been an amazing experience. When you have the opportunity to work closely with a child you really get to see "the light bulb go on" when they grasp a new concept and the feeling that you are making a difference is overwhelming.

Being in these classrooms has reinforced my desire to pursue a degree in education so that I can continue to "Make a Difference!"

#3

Constantine Johns

I MADE A DIFFERENCE

PTSA Scholarship Essay

#3

I made a difference with my compassion. It's easy to take things for granted. We have a roof over our heads, we have clothing, and we have parents. It's hard to imagine in today's world, how much poverty still exists; just ask the orphans of the impoverished town of Boju, Romania.

When I was researching my Eagle Scout project, I wanted to touch the lives of as many people as I could, in a way that spoke to my own heart, through sports. What child isn't enthralled by a ball; wowed by its bounce; delighted in chasing it? When I heard there was a small town in Romania with an orphanage whose kids played soccer in bare feet; whose soccer field was covered in dirt and rubble; and whose soccer balls were made of shredded nylons; I knew I could make a difference.

I went door to door, school to school asking for all sorts of sports equipment for the less fortunate. It was amazing how many people wanted to help; people who were inspired to give back. I had equipment that ranged from brand new to gently used; from soccer balls to basketballs, baseball bats to lacrosse sticks and cleats to tennis shoes. Once I accumulated everything, we refurbished it all. We made sure the shoes were cleaned and deodorized; the ball's leather looked as good as new and then made sure it got to the children of Boju. Whatever we couldn't shove into duffle bags and load on a plane, we distributed to Denver's Inner-City Parish. It was - and is - about giving back and paying it forward. Whether it's Boulder or Boju, 5,280 miles high or 5,680 miles away we can give back to those less fortunate.

It was the best feeling in the world, pouring over pictures of kids, chasing soccer balls and seeing them in tennis shoes; tossing basketballs into make-shift hoops giggling. I made a difference by acting locally; sharing globally and caring universally. I know as long as I stay focused on giving back, my compassion will always make a difference.