

2013 WINNING ESSAY BY
KATIE WATSON

TOPIC: "HOW CAN WE PROMOTE BETTER VOLUNTEERISM IN OUR
COMMUNITY AND SHOULD IT BE REQUIRED IN SCHOOL"

Volunteering is a great way to get involved and make new friends in our community. Some people see volunteering as a difficult chore, but I see it as a fun productive way to help our community and put a smile on peoples' faces. Volunteerism can come in many forms such as volunteering your time and ideas, keeping the environment clean, donating items or even donating money. Anything you do will be appreciated and I urge everyone to use their time and talent to start helping now.

At Eastern I joined the Escape club, which is an organization that promotes environmental awareness throughout our school. Many people aren't aware that bottles with caps still attached cannot be recycled and are just thrown in the trash. Our Escape club wanted to stop polluting our environment so we collect these plastic bottle caps and ship them to a factory where they can be recycled properly. We also collect gently used shoes and books to donate them to people who cannot afford these items we sometimes take for granted. Volunteering gives you a rewarding feeling that lets you know you are doing something to make a difference and help your community.

I also love meeting .new people and being involved in school activities so I joined Interact, another club at Eastern. We volunteer our time to host many events to spend time with senior citizens, foster children, and children with down-syndrome. We also have fundraisers to support our school projects and our entire community. Volunteering doesn't have to be boring as long as you choose something you are interested in. I always have fun at these Interact events and I encourage you to join this club if you attend Eastern.

Not only have I seen the smiling faces of people I've had the pleasure to meet during Interact events, I have also seen the major need for volunteerism while workingat my churches' outreach. People come from all over the county to receive the bag of toiletries our church provides

for them. Donating is another important aspect of volunteerism and will always be accepted. It's important for everyone here to realize that even our little town has families that cannot support themselves on their own and we should all make an effort to help them.

To promote volunteerism in our community it should be required at least one time in a student's school career because it teaches young students that their efforts are always needed and appreciated. This will encourage students to willingly volunteer and it will make us closer as a community. Another advantage of volunteering at an early age is that it gives students an opportunity to see which branch of volunteerism they are most passionate about whether it be with helping people, animals, or the environment. Every little bit helps. Everyone has a talent or an ability that can be shared to help others.