School Recycling Bins

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To me, community service means not only making a difference in the place where you live, but also doing so in a way that will leave a lasting impact on your community. When I moved from Portland, Oregon, to the rural town of Homedale, Idaho, I noticed a distinct change in environmental protection awareness. In Portland, every residence was given bins in which to place recyclables to be picked up at curbside, while in Homedale, motivated individuals were forced to drive 20 miles to recycle the same items. However, our town recently had a trailer with recycling bins on it installed outside of City Hall. A very good start, I thought, and I looked to further the progress in Homedale by incorporating recycling at the high school.

I talked about the idea with my principal, Mr. Williams, and he was all for it. He mentioned that Mr. McMillan, our media center advisor, had been plotting a similar plan with his after-school program, Real Future Leaders. I suggested that the RFL, National Honor Society, class presidents, and student council work together to install and sustain a recycling program. Mr. McMillan agreed and was able to get a grant to purchase the bins to get the plan going. The other Honor Society members and I then made some commercials for Channel 1 (in-school TV) and posters to help motivate the other students to recycle their cans and bottles.

We now have a weekly collection schedule that includes each of the four groups I mentioned above, two of which I am a part of (student council, NHS). The groups collect all of the items and rinse them out in a janitorial washtub. The recyclables are then put in a large garbage can that Mr. McMillan’s son takes down to the bins at City Hall when necessary.

I am very proud of the program that I helped engineer. I feel that the best examples of community service are those that involve the community’s participation. These kinds of programs are much more successful than those one person attempts to run single-handedly. I am attempting to give my community the tools to sustain this action plan after I go off to college. This project has shown me that making a difference is always possible, even in unlikely situations. I was concerned that my plan would not take hold in a community that often views environmental activism with skepticism, but I am grateful it has and I look forward to expanding it even more.