

When I interviewed for a program within Sam Houston State University as an incoming freshman, one of the questions was, “Are you prepared to give back?” As an interviewee, my response was immediate, as I hoped to put my best foot forward. “Absolutely,” I said, “I would love to.” Since that interview, I have found myself in numerous positions to act on my claim, and each experience has contributed to my growth and a deeper understanding of giving back.

As a university student, it is important to study for classes, as the grade one receives often dictates possibilities moving forward. However, the lessons of a classroom can only carry us so far. Our lives are further enhanced by those with whom we associate; hence, the company we choose should be intentional. Our loved ones may share our values, experiences, interests, and they add healthy laughter and goodness to our lives. They also teach us, and occasionally should be thanked for it. One of the most important lessons I learned came from one individual who left behind an example of service to which, in my mind, few others will compare.

I met this fellow bearkat early in my college experience, and as we spent more time together, I watched as he treated those around him with a generosity and acceptance which I had never before witnessed. He helped those broken down on the side of the road, paid for friends’ meals, offered his personal belongings to others in times of need, celebrated others’ accomplishments, and consistently followed through on his commitments. One day, I asked him what drove some of these behaviors, as I had not always possessed the same mentality. He explained to me, “I love the people around me, and love is giving to another without concern of your own personal gain.”

His many demonstrations of strong character inspired self- evaluation of my own actions and purpose. I realize now that his perspective is an aspect of service that most volunteers lack. Many students show up complacently to their jobs to earn money, to class to receive credit, or

events to earn community service hours and promote their respective organizations. Sometimes, it is too easy to check a box on a list of requirements. In reality, serving others is a tangible, communal improvement which sends love into the world around us. It helps bond us to our environments, and to the people we share a common goal with. Additionally, our most precious resource is time, as we cannot retrieve it, nor predict it. There is no more meaningful a way to spend the time we are given than to love and be loved. If we should measure our lives by the rubrics of any concept, let it be that of love within our service.