Essay for Consideration in the Peter Witt Scholarship

T Nicholas Domitrovic (njd18@case.edu),

Before I came to Case Western I had no idea the amount of ways I am able to volunteer in the Cleveland area, despite living thirty minutes from the city my whole life. But now, after one and a half years of volunteering, I feel that I have done a great deal of work to better the greater Cleveland community as a whole. I work directly with the founder, President, and CEO of a local Cleveland non-profit, The Human Initiative Foundation (HIF). My duties with HIF have varied from academic researcher, to hands-on program organizer. In addition, I have also motivated others to become involved with volunteering in the Cleveland community by holding the position of Philanthropy Chairman of my fraternity. I am very involved in the politics and was also elected Treasurer of the CWRU Chapter of Young Americans for Liberty (YAL), the most active political group on Case’s campus. When I first came to campus I was unsure whether I would be able to accomplish the service and philanthropy goals I had set for myself. Now, I feel that I have.

The most important role I have taken volunteering in the Cleveland community is with the HIF. Originally I became interested in the group in early fall of 2008 because they offered me a job with my federal work study requirements. I interviewed and was offered a paid position. Soon though, the recession of 2008 would hit, and I was forced to choose between not being involved in HIF and volunteering in HIF with no compensation. I chose the latter, because I felt then and still do to this day that the work HIF does is essential to the community. I started researching Cleveland poverty over summer 2009 and in fall of the same year I was offered the position of Case Western Contact for the Cleveland Holiday Wraps (CHW) program. The program delivers toys and clothes to Cleveland’s underprivileged boys and girls. In 2008 it was the number one source of donations to the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. CHW works differently than other national non-profits. For example, most non-profits only give gifts to the children, while CHW gives gifts to the parents as well. In the end, I was able to raise 380 dollars at Case for CHW, and involved my fraternity in the process as well.

As Philanthropy Chairman, it is my responsibility to encourage and organize my fraternity brothers to volunteer in the Cleveland community. Such examples included wrapping presents for the Cleveland Holiday Wraps program, volunteering at with the Cleveland MetroParks, and we also have made special trips to the Lake County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability to donate our time. Also, I convinced two of my brothers to join me as a mentor in the greater Cleveland Big Brothers Big Sisters program. As this program requires a full calendar year’s commitment, many brothers were hesitant; however I was able to convince brothers to take on the obligation. In addition, I have changed my fraternity’s bylaws, our version of a constitution, to focus on local volunteering. I changed our adopt-a-program organization, the organization that will receive the main philanthropic benefit from my fraternity, to benefit the HIF, after convincing my brothers that local philanthropy was better than the national philanthropic organization that had been the status quo for years. My brothers felt that I had done a great job promoting philanthropy, and selected me as Brother of the Month for November, 2009.

Finally, I have helped the Cleveland community by helping to found the Case chapter of Young Americans for Liberty (YAL) during my first semester at Case. I have attended about half a dozen political protests with the group, alerting the public to problems they may not know about. Currently, I am the group’s Treasurer with plans of running for either Vice President or President. If I am elected to one of those positions I plan on ensuring that the group stays involved with the Cleveland community and encouraging others to do the same, whether it is politically of philanthropically.