

Coleman Reardon

*Service Above Self*

Throughout my high school career, I have been involved in a broad range of activities. I've had some great experiences while being a member of sports teams and participating in things like plays and musicals. While I will cherish each memory I have made from being a part of these various groups and clubs, some of the best times and most rewarding experiences I have had have come about while taking part in community service.

The events that I've been a part of have all been different; each organized for a certain group or in benefit of a specific organization. Some of these include the annual Cohoes Halloween Parade and Party, the annual Easter Egg Hunt held at George Street Park, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade mixer at Cohoes Middle School, and my personal favorite, the Annual Cohoes Turkey Trot. For the past four years I've been the "caboose" in the kids' races, there to make sure that those running on those brisk Thursday mornings made it to the finish line safe and sound. Thanksgiving has always been one of my favorite days of the year. It stands out as a day to be with your family and is especially significant to me, as it is a terrific opportunity to be with my Cohoes family. My Thanksgivings have been the perfect culmination of family as well as community gatherings.

I first became involved with service as I entered high school. The people that I knew who had already been in high school spoke of the numerous opportunities I would have with entering this new place. Eager to make the most of my time, I joined community service club on the first day. Over the next four years, I quickly learned of why service was so important to others and myself and the seemingly endless chances to do some great things for my school and community.

To me, service is the giving of time and effort to improve the well-being of others or to benefit organizations that do just that. The feeling that comes about as a result of community service is one like no other. Some may think that the service they do does not have an effect on others or the world around them. While at times this may be true, in many cases the influence service has isn't physical, but rather emotional or of great significance to someone else. It is great to do things like clean-up around the community on Global Youth Service Day and Beautification Day, but some of the greatest service events I've taken part in have not had this physical effect. The important thing to remember is that if you're working hard to better your community or the lives of others, this unique feeling will come to fruition and the impact will be felt.

After all that I've gained from my service experience, I cannot imagine going on without continuing to help my community. Over the next several years, I will be spending much of my time away from Cohoes, the place that I've lived my whole life. However, I will continue to be as involved as possible, regardless of where I may be. One of the few things that bothers me is when people believe that they are not capable of doing what they want because they're from Cohoes, as if the place they live is limiting them from reaching their full capacity. To them, I say that they have the power to make a change. It is not the city that makes the people, but rather the people that make the city. There will always be some who think poorly of their community. The key is to be aware of the ability to perform service and improve the place you live. Only then will we be on track to make the place we live exceptional, and for ourselves, reach our full potential.