

Marco Trujillo

College Reading & Writing

Volunteer Service Essay

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I Don't Care for Pea-Rock

When I first started school here at UNI I was on the wrestling team and one Saturday morning the whole team reported to an elementary school to put together a bunch of playground equipment, or so we thought.

So all the wrestlers are standing around looking at a playground that was covered in dirt/mud and had almost no equipment put together. Once the coordinator came around to telling what we were going to be doing we had all lost all motivation to do any kind of physical labor. It was eight in the morning and the guy told us that he only needed half of us right now, so the older guys got to stay and us freshmen had to come back at one. When I got back at one, the only thing that had been accomplished is most of the big equipment had been assembled. So we all figured that most of the hard work had been taken care of by the seniors, but we were way off.

We were all just standing around when we heard some dude say, "Ok the truck's here, get your shovels ready." We all just looked at each other and thought "Shovels?"

The adults told us that we had to put a six-inch layer of pea-rock down then a six-inch layer of mulch on top of that. So from one o'clock until six o'clock we shoveled ton after ton of pea-rock and spread it around the playground. Then after we had spread all the rock, came the mulch. The mulch was much lighter but it still was a bitch to shovel and more. That afternoon was some of the most grueling manual labor I had ever done. By the end of the day I was dirty, calloused, and sore as hell. But I felt good after it was all done, like I had done something with my day. If I hadn't of gone and done this, I would of just laid around my dorm and played Xbox.

Throughout the day our wrestling coach was right along with us doing the work, which I thought

was very admirable. He did everything we did and probably a lot more. Whenever he saw someone getting frustrated or discouraged he would tell him to take a break and just go get some lemonade. Until I that day I never understood the reviving power lemonade had. And let me tell you, it saves lives.

The thing that made the real tough was the fact that only freshmen were doing the shoveling, and the sophomores and some juniors were doing the spreading. Shoveling rock all day isn't anybody's idea of fun. But that's the price you pay when you're the young guys on the team. By the end of the day my hands were worn down to the bone and were on the verge of falling off. It would have been nice if they had provided gloves or something.

Like I said earlier, I felt good about myself when the day was done. Even though the work I did was backbreaking and gay, the job had to be done by someone; it might as well have been some strong wrestlers and myself. When I was a kid my dad put a jungle gym together for me in the backyard, now I know what kind of hell he had to go through to make me and my sisters happy. But I bet when he saw the happy smiles on our faces when we played on it for the first time, he thought it was all worth it. And I took a drive past that playground and saw all the kids playing on that equipment, I felt like a hundred bucks. Even though some of the kids were throwing the pea-rock at my car as crept by.