

“First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast,” Season 1

Episode Transcript: Khloe Kennedy on “Contributing to a Larger Community”

[Attn.]

On today’s episode of, This I Believe, we hear from Khloe Kennedy - a first-year student at Cottey College. She discusses growing up in a small town and observes that her contributions to her own communities, both big and small, led to many opportunities for herself. This is, I Believe in Contributing to a Larger Community.

[Bling]

I grew up in a small town in the Mountain West region of the United States, and without the support of members in my community I would not be attending the college that was a perfect fit for me. It is because of this that I understand the utmost importance of forming connections and relationships with those around us, as it can only lead us to better opportunities. I believe when you place the needs of your community, whether it be big or small, over the needs of yourself, others will take notice and are inclined to do the same for you.

My involvement in my community began as a way for me to escape many of the problems I endured when at home. The household I was raised in was incredibly abusive and detrimental to my overall well being, and I frequently sought distractions from this. I became a member of nearly every extracurricular organization at my school and learned that communities can exist in small numbers too. My membership within my volleyball team is an excellent example of this, and is also where I was first able to observe that my contributions to a community could influence the actions of others.

I began playing volleyball in a summer club 11 years ago. Many of the girls I was teammates with when I began playing were beside me when my last season ended. It was easy to create friendship within the team, but as we progressed in skill level it became difficult to stay positive when the game was frustrating. Despite this, my final season playing was the most rewarding, although circumstances were less than ideal. After practice one day, my coach called me into her office and told me she had no room on her Varsity team for me to play. I was offered the option to sit on the bench for the Varsity team or move down to the JV level. At first I was angry, but I stepped back and assumed my new role as a teammate and became the most encouraging person I could be.

Volleyball is a communication sport and as long as someone is constantly talking, from the bench or on the court, the team is able to stay on the same page. This became the position I played, giving my teammates verbal context on what was happening where they couldn’t see and cheering them on every step of the way. My efforts were praised by coaches of other teams from across the state and my own coach made me a team captain for my leadership abilities. By the end of the season I saw the influence my encouragement had on the other athletes, and noticed that they had begun to develop similar habits to mine. At our awards banquet, my teammates voted me “Team Leader” a testament to the impact I had made. This served as a push for me to look for other places where I might do the same.

I had been a member of my school's student government for several years, but after my newfound experience on my volleyball team I found myself with a different approach to involvement. I sought out to form similar relationships with members of my council, however I faced many more struggles than I had previously experienced. In the midst of planning projects like canned food drives, community activity fairs, and sponsored student events I was the object of much criticism by advisory members of the council. In spite of this, I pushed myself to contribute even more than I previously had; I skipped lunch to copy fliers, stayed late after school to discuss concerns with administration, even going as far as sewing homecoming court sashes in the middle of my study hall.

In my heightened efforts, I began to notice other students doing the same. Meeting attendance increased, other council representatives would discuss concerns with administration beside me, and my workload steadily decreased as others began to offer their help. The district school board eventually took notice and praised our council for our constant efforts to make change. One member of the board took specific note of me, and she pulled me aside after the meeting and thanked me for the influence I had been on my peers.

Several weeks later, this same member of the school board called me to ask about my plans for college. Upon hearing that I was undecided, she mentioned she was a PEO and invited me to an informational meeting about a school called Cottey. I attended this meeting and heard from an alumni about everything the school had to offer; I immediately knew it was where I needed to go. To my astonishment, the chapter offered to sponsor me for scholarships and gave me additional resources to financial aid in my hometown. The chapter president had said she had seen my contributions to my volleyball team and student council and that she hoped to see me continue my work within other organizations.

My journey to understanding why community is so important was long and hard, but it only solidified my perception of giving back to those around you. I believe that when you give yourself to communities, whether they are big or small, your larger community will reciprocate that good and do the same for you. Change always starts small and grows from there, contributing to a larger community does not always require large initiatives. It can begin with kindness, or selflessness, or even just using your voice to amplify the concerns of others. The little things you do for someone can easily become the big things that others do for you.

[Beans]

Attributions

"Attn." MP3.

"Beans." MP3.

"Bling." MP3.