

Gathering Pebbles

by Lea Bergman - 2014 Arthur Ashe Essay Contest

I never thought that I could ever make a difference anywhere. I was just one small grain of sand in a sea of rocks and boulders that all seemed so much larger than I. Honestly, I didn't know very much about Arthur Ashe, but once I got into the world of tennis this one name kept coming up, "Arthur Ashe, Arthur Ashe, Arthur Ashe." I looked into this monumental person I had heard about so much, and realized the impact he made, not just on a few but on everyone. He was a boulder in our sea of people; he was big enough to change the tides just like the moon.

Now I was determined to gather my bits of sediment, turn my piece of sand into a pebble, and see where I could go. I started volunteering at the Alpine Tennis programs, helping kids under ten learn the game that taught me so much. I took another step and started to volunteer whenever I could. I helped with activities at a retirement home. Over the past two years I've used the hospitality I've learned through tennis to volunteer with The Happiness 5k, Iverson Hospital benefits, Special Olympics, Science Kids, and giving tours at Iverson Mansion. Through working with young kids that could not normally afford the equipment and lessons for this great sport I realized exactly how privileged I am. I used money I earned selling lemonade to buy school supplies for a school I visited in Kenya. I was adopted from Vietnam at eight months and in 2010 I visited with street kids in Hanoi at Blue Dragon. Even now, I am helping my mother with the Laramie chapter of NJTL.

I know it isn't much, but I'm doing what I can to help those around me. I now know that all things big had to start small. The earth was created by trillions of particles gathered over time. That is what I plan to do with my little grain of sand; gather pieces to create something bigger with every little thing I can do.