

LEARNING

What you do says a lot about who you are

Years ago, the mantra in college admissions was “be a well rounded student” — so admissions folks looked for students who were involved in all sorts of activities. Because of this, students and families saw that the key to a good college acceptance was to get really involved in everything. A resume became a long laundry list of clubs and times a student volunteered at the blood drive or local community event.

As students became so overly involved in every possible activity, colleges started realizing that all their applicants seemed the same — and what they really needed in order to have a thriving environment was a “well rounded community.” Rather than seek out a student who has had every experience prior to college, they began seeking out students who had unique experiences that would add to their community’s sense of depth and breadth.

Today, an applicant who has pursued a passion to its fullest rather than scattered him or herself over



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all possible activities poses the better fit. The lesson here for young high school students looking toward college is to find your niche. What are you deeply interested in? Are you an athlete, an artist, a musician, a person dedicated to service to others? Finding that area that inspires you to action is an important part of ninth and 10th grade — colleges want to see that you are eager to get involved in your community because that shows a likelihood that you will get involved in their community as well.

Choosing an activity to pursue may take some experimenting. Join some clubs you think you might like, try out for a team or a

theatrical event, take a risk and test your comfort zone with an activity you think you might not be good at. Get involved. The beauty of the first two years of high school is that you have time to see what tickles your fancy. Toward the end of 10th grade, hopefully you have found what you connect with or what your passions are. If you need to work after school to earn money, that’s great. If you can choose a job that helps you learn more about what you are interested in, all the better. If you have very little time to pursue non-work related activities, choose to do something consistently, even if it is for a short period of time each week or month. Building a history of consistency — be it at a job or in an activity — speaks loudly to a college that you are who you say you are: engaged, dependable and committed.

As you move into the 11th and 12th grades, it is time to start offering yourself as a leader — volunteer to be an officer in your club or an organizer of events that benefit your community beyond school. Be

a mentor to a younger student and take more risks; stretch yourself to do something that makes you uncomfortable because you weren’t sure you could do it. It could be entering yourself in a competition or running for a leadership position, or organizing an event that would involve managing a lot of people. These steps into leadership can come from any direction, but they are all self-driven and are not “given” to you by a higher authority. You’d be amazed at what you learn about yourself and what you’re capable of when you try something you didn’t know you could do. Even if you fail at it, you have learned something that might turn into a great college essay — but I’ll leave that for another discussion.

A quick note on volunteering: It is a wonderful thing to volunteer your time and effort to any cause, and it should become a lifelong habit. Knowing you are helping others have a better environment or opportunity, or even just a better day, is extremely fulfilling. The key

to volunteering, in the eyes of a college, is to volunteer where your passions lie. If you just volunteer in order to add another item to your resume, colleges can see through that. Student resumes that reflect choices based on passions and willingness to grow and take risks may not be long, but they speak to a student who is going to help create the “well rounded community” a college seeks to create through their admissions process. It’s not a game about making choices in order to get into college; it’s about making choices that offer you a chance to become a person committed to both your own development and the community around you. That person is the one a college is interested in getting to know more about.

Heather Cavalli, director of college counseling at Hyde School, is also an independent educational consultant for Best Fit Educational Planners in Woodstock. She can be contacted at info@bestfitplanners.com.



SCHOOL DONATES NETS TO KENYANS

Courtesy photos

This summer, 150 mosquito nets were distributed to needy children and families in Kenya, thanks to the fund-raising efforts during the 2008-'09 school year at Pomfret Community School. The mosquito nets will prolong the lives of many in the Kibera slum. According to fund-raising coordinator, Michelle Bartholic, of Pomfret Community School, they will be trying to raise money this year for the new school building project.



Woodstock Elementary School

- Monday, Sept. 21:** Macaroni and cheese, peas and carrots, fruit, milk.
- Tuesday, Sept. 22:** Chef salad, wheat roll, fruit, milk.
- Wednesday, Sept. 23:** Chicken tenders, whipped potatoes, fruit, milk.
- Thursday, Sept. 24:** Breaded fish nuggets, oven fries, fruit, milk.
- Friday, Sept. 25:** Pizza, zucchini, fruit, milk.

Woodstock Middle School

- Monday, Sept. 21:** Hamburger on a roll, potato wedges, fruit, milk.
- Tuesday, Sept. 22:** Waffle sticks, roasted red potatoes, sausage, fruit, milk.
- Wednesday, Sept. 23:** General Tsao chicken, Oriental veggies, fruit, milk.
- Thursday, Sept. 24:** Chicken parmesan on a bulkie roll, zucchini, fruit, milk.
- Friday, Sept. 25:** Italian Hot Pockets, garden salad fruit, milk.

Pomfret Community School

- Monday, Sept. 21:** Spaghetti with sauce, green beans, breadsticks, Pomfret apple.
- Tuesday, Sept. 22:** Chicken teriyaki, buttered rice, carrots, pineapple.
- Wednesday, Sept. 23:** Turkey sandwich with lettuce and tomato, pretzel rings, fruit (dismissal at 12:30 p.m.).
- Thursday, Sept. 24:** Pepperoni or cheese pizza, tossed salad, fruit, cookie.
- Friday, Sept. 25:** Grilled chicken, chicken and stars soup, Goldfish crackers, veggies, oranges.

Ellis Tech

- Monday, Sept. 21:** Grilled chicken on a wheat roll, coleslaw, fruit, milk.
- Tuesday, Sept. 22:** Beef and cheese tortilla with lettuce and tomato, fruit, milk.
- Wednesday, Sept. 23:** Macaroni and cheese, broccoli, fruit, milk.
- Thursday, Sept. 24:** Chicken and vegetables, rice, fruit, milk.
- Friday, Sept. 25:** Chef’s choice, vegetables, fruit, milk.

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