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MyImpact Project Report

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Reach Through Rackets: Civic Engagement Project Report

Executive Summary:

As the founder of Reach Through Rackets, I am honored to present this report showcasing our civic engagement project. Our organization is founded on bi-monthly tennis sessions that provide free tennis clinics to children with disabilities, with the mission of inclusivity regardless of the challenges. We also organize annual events such as the Barrington Hot Chocolate Fundraiser, which we host annually in December. This report outlines my inspiration, our planning and execution process, the impact we've had on the community, and the personal growth I've acquired through these dual civic engagement projects.

Inspiration for the Project:

I was drawn to Reach Through Rackets because of a passion for tennis and a recognition of the sport's ability to develop community relationships between different groups. I was shocked by the inability of many community members to have access to quality tennis instruction, particularly from communities of people with disabilities. I recognized a chance to create a program in which my knowledge and passion for tennis could provide an effective connection while establishing valuable life skills in students.

Building on our current tennis program, I will never forget the origins of the Barrington Hot Chocolate Fundraiser. It was a simple but important experience: making hot chocolate at a friend's home. What was originally a fun friend hangout ignited an idea to make this experience

an event that engages the whole school and brings in money for children in need. I envisioned a chance to combine the holiday Christmas season with positive action to help undocumented and underprivileged children at Barrington Elementary School.

These dual inspirations reflect my commitment to continuous community engagement through tennis as well as responding to seasonal opportunities for influence through focused action with our annual fundraiser.

Planning and Implementation:

Ongoing Tennis Sessions

As the founder, I've ensured that our primary civic engagement activity is around regular tennis sessions that are held throughout the year:

- Participant Recruitment: I collaborate with local community centers and schools in order to recruit members who will benefit from our program, but without our program, would have no way of learning tennis.
- Volunteer Recruitment/Training: Our club's volunteers are made up of our high school's junior varsity and varsity teams, who are keen on making positive change. While they have basic knowledge of the sport, we ensure in-depth training, teaching volunteers' methods for tennis, allowing them to be highly adaptable, as well as mentorship skills to all club members, to make sure each and every session is really fun and intuitive.
- Curriculum Development: I have created a developmental curriculum that builds tennis skills while instilling values like perseverance, sportsmanship, and teamwork.
- Equipment Management: Through donations and fundraising, I have a store of rackets, balls, and other equipment which participants can use during sessions.

- **Schedule Coordination:** I schedule session time precisely so that it accommodates our volunteers' academic schedules, participants' and facilities' schedules.
- **Progress Tracking:** I monitor participants' improvement in tennis techniques as well as personal development areas like confidence and social interaction.

Each session of tennis follows the defined schedule format I have created, with warm-up, skill teaching, practice drills, and final games applying learned techniques. I vary sessions according to participant age, skill level, and particular goals.

Barrington Hot Chocolate Fundraiser (Annual December Event)

In addition to our year-round tennis program, I host the Barrington Hot Chocolate Fundraiser every December:

- **Team Mobilization:** To facilitate this special occasion, I mobilized a bigger team of over twenty volunteers to help with the week-long campaign.
- **Holiday Marketing:** I coordinate the making of Christmas fliers and decorations that are sent out around the school to raise awareness and holiday spirit. The Christmas spirit is widespread as we adorn the corridors with holiday trimmings and ornaments.
- **Production Planning:** Despite the feared expectation of upcoming midterms, I designed processes to produce and guarantee quality for bulk hot chocolate, using a homemade recipe and creating eight gallons of hot chocolate each day..
- **Active Sales Approach:** Unlike employing passive sales, I step up in leading our team to actively roam around the cafeteria, approaching potential customers at their tables, and selling to whoever we encounter.

- **Extended Hours:** I organize our group to arrive in school at 7:00 AM to prepare sales points, and I personally brew hot chocolate until 10:00 PM each evening. I never get tired because I know we're doing it for the right people - the children who need it most.
- **Gift Procurement:** Once the fundraiser is complete, our team arranges for the purchase of gifts based on the raised amount and a spreadsheet that shows each kid's gift requests.
- **Gift Delivery:** I coordinate the gift delivery to Barrington Elementary School, where all the volunteers unwrap presents with their assigned kids, giving a satisfying conclusion to our annual project.

My application of both aspects demonstrates my commitment to continuous, persistent community engagement through tennis and also leveraging the seasons for focused impact through our fundraiser.

Impact on the Community

Impact 1: Creating Accessible Sports Opportunities

Using Reach Through Rackets, I have leveled the playing field for an often-perceived pricey or affluent sport. Through means of free coaching, equipment availability, and sponsorship, I allow those who may not have learned the game without our program. I am impressed with how the demographics of participants are increasingly diversified, and also the latent potential of children who were otherwise unexposed is now building tennis competence.

Participation has been linked to increased physical activity levels, better coordination, and increased confidence in attempting new activities. Parents have reported improved well-being of their children and increased participation in physical activity. Continuity of our tennis program allows player-coach relationships and tennis skills to build over time.

Impact 2: Cross-Community Connections Through the Barrington Fundraiser

The annual hot chocolate fundraiser that I created has created a strong connection between two distinct communities—our school and Barrington Elementary School. This bonding between schools has created a relationship that is more than just the one event, and it has paved the way for ongoing support.

The fundraiser continues to surpass its financial goals, with our last campaign raising over twice our original goal. This impressive feat enabled me to buy more gifts than originally planned, greatly increasing our ability to benefit children at Barrington Elementary.

After the fundraiser, I also organized the purchase and delivery of the gifts to the school. Seeing the smiling faces of the children as they tore open their gifts is one memory I have always cherished. I felt such a big sense of fulfillment, not just for myself for taking initiative for the project, but even for my team of volunteers, who had juggled this event along with their hectic midterm schedules to help make a difference. At the end of the week, we made a remarkable impact: we brought our community together, raised money for a worthy cause, and most importantly, brought the Christmas spirit to the children of both Lake Travis High and Barrington Elementary.

Growth in Knowledge of Civic Virtue

Starting and operating Reach Through Rackets has fostered tremendous growth in my knowledge of civic virtue, connection with the community, and societal impact:

Advanced Understanding of Civic Virtue

As a result of these projects, I've had practical experience applying many facets of civic virtue to:

- Consistency: The repetitive consistency of our tennis program has led me to conclude that civic virtue is not constant effort at individual moments but continual effort over duration.
- Responsibility: I've discovered firsthand how the responsibility of my leadership contributes toward overall success, where every decision comes with a clear impact on our tennis sessions and fundraising outcomes.
- Compassion: Direct contact with different members of society through tennis and with the underprivileged children through the fundraiser has increased my empathy and understanding of inequalities in our society.
- Sacrifice: The rigorous schedule called for personal sacrifices of time and energy, especially during the fundraiser when I would get to school at 7 am and work until 10 pm. This taught me that effective civic engagement sometimes means sacrificing oneself for the greater good.
- Initiative: Both projects have taught me how student initiative can solve community problems without waiting for institutional action.

Through these experiences, I've matured from theoretical civic virtue to practiced embodiment. Through this experiential learning, I've formed a foundation that guides my ongoing civic engagement, which shapes every facet of my leadership.

Deepened Understanding of Communities

My two-pronged approach to civic engagement has widely expanded my sense of our greater community:

- Knowledge about Demographics: Working with a variety of participants in tennis classes and working with underprivileged and undocumented children at Barrington Elementary

has increased my awareness level of varying socioeconomic realities within the same area.

- Identification of Barriers: I've learned firsthand about the obstacles that hinder equal access to enrichment opportunities like sports education.
- Institutional Relationships: Working with multiple schools has taught me the method by which schools can be used as community centers and sites for collaboration.
- Resource Disparities: The two projects have highlighted resource disparities and opportunity disparities within communities, solidifying my understanding of systemic disparities.

This wider community understanding has disturbed my assumptions and broadened my lenses, refining a more advanced understanding of the varied experiences in our broader community.

Growth in Impact Capacity

Perhaps above all, I've learned dramatic insight into my ability to create positive community impact:

- Value of Sustainability: The sustainability of our tennis program has taught me the value of consistent, long-term engagement over occasional, one-time events.
- Understanding of Scale: The fundraiser demonstrated that student-led projects can provide significant financial resources, as we doubled our original fundraising goal.
- Leadership Development: Coordinating standard tennis sessions as well as the intense fundraiser has nurtured leadership skills applicable to further civic action.
- Strategic Planning: Implementing high-level projects to completion has settled planning skills necessary for effective community action.

- Outcome Visualization: Seeing instantaneous smiles from kids upon gift-receiving and palpable enhancements from tennis players provides instantaneous feedback towards the real-world effectiveness of civic action.

This greater capacity for influence is likely my most lasting product. I now have not just the desire to be engaged civically but also the functional skills, confidence, and real experience to be so effectively.

Conclusion

As the founder of Reach Through Rackets, I've tried to contribute positively to the community both in terms of long-term programming and targeted special events. Our regular tennis sessions provide consistent community engagement and skill development, while our annual Barrington Hot Chocolate Fundraiser creates a strong seasonal contribution for underprivileged children.

The effectiveness of this two-pronged approach—providing frequent opportunities to play tennis and doing high-impact fundraising—provides a strong model for civic engagement in an integrated way. Most importantly, perhaps, the growth I've experienced in knowing civic virtue, community complexity, and my potential for making a difference is an investment in my future civic leadership.

I will never forget the excitement of organizing my first of many fundraisers—a description that summarizes the manner in which these projects are not singular events but the beginning of my lifetime commitment to community service. Through Reach Through Rackets,

I've been able not only to achieve immediate objectives but to ignite my ongoing commitment to community service and leadership.