

## **Anna DeVold – June Nelson Memorial Scholarship Essay**

Growing up, my family always encouraged me to strive for excellence in everything I do, and over the course of my life, I've learned that true success isn't reached through accomplishments alone; social and emotional well-being is critical as well. When you take care of yourself, you minimize stress, increase focus, and boost productivity in all your endeavors while also remaining happy and healthy. These benefits can be attained in many ways, but for me, the best way to look after my social and emotional well-being is through serving others.

I love being able to help others; ever since I can remember, I've dedicated time to delivering meals and comfort to families in need, made regular visits to assisted living facilities, and helped maintain our church's facilities. It was because of these values instilled in me from a young age that five years ago, I decided to start my own environmental program, P.O.P. – Promote Our Pollinators.

P.O.P. is an environmental program I designed to educate others about the importance of pollinators and why their numbers are declining, while providing ways to promote their population growth, and inspiring the next generation to be good stewards of our natural resources.

I developed and distributed educational materials, created and helped plant 2,000 pollinator packs, gave school and community, coordinated with governmental agencies to produce pollinator-friendly spaces, and designed a website, online class, and social media accounts.

While awards were never my goal, my work with P.O.P. led to many honors that allowed me to spread my message; P.O.P. was featured on the Disney Channel's *In the Nook* Earth Day

special, in *People Magazine* and Scholastic's *Choices Magazine*, it received the President's Environmental Youth Award, and many more.

Through these endeavors, I've provided over 12,000 plants for pollinators and reached approximately 5,000 families with the message to Promote Our Pollinators. My P.O.P. social media account has reached over 20,000 individuals internationally, and that number continues to grow.

I've also had the privilege of substitute teaching and assisting in younger dance classes at my studio over the years, and that experience has allowed me to start volunteer teaching! I now conduct ballet classes for 7-9 year-olds and 10-12 year-olds. I love to express myself through dance and being able to share my passion with young dancers is amazing!

I am the President of my school's Student Council and National Honor Society where I've been able to organize and lead many service projects to benefit our community like roadside trash cleanups, food and toy drives, and activity booths at community events. I also serve as the Student Representative for the Kenai Peninsula Borough Resilience and Security Advisory Commission.

Over the past five years, through these endeavors and others like them, I have logged almost 1,050 hours in the service of others.

The experiences I've had promoting my social and emotional well-being through these activities opened doors to many opportunities that shaped my future and will help me be successful later in life!

When I began my work with P.O.P., the saying, "Do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life" often came to mind. As I considered my future, I realized that the work I

enjoyed doing for P.O.P. was very similar to the work of a communications professional, so I researched communications careers, and they were perfect for me! Social media advertising, graphic design, photography, website design, writing and giving presentations, and even interview participation: my work with P.O.P. had prepared me for every aspect.

Ever since I discovered I loved both community service and communications work, I've wanted to become a Public Relations Specialist for a community-minded organization or company. I want to use my talents, skills, and knowledge to help other people, and the best way to accomplish that goal is by establishing my career with an organization focused on serving others.

My work with P.O.P. has also given me opportunities to interact with the owners, managers, and communications directors of many Alaskan companies and organizations. I've been able to build a good reputation and positive relationships with these potential future employers, opening doors to job opportunities once I've completed my degree program.

Community service not only helped me grow in my social and emotional well-being, but it's also created a path to a successful career in communications here in Alaska. Some of the most valuable and influential moments in my life were brought about because I chose to care for my well-being by caring for others.