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**The theme of the 2021 AASB Annual Conference is "Working Toward Equity and Inclusion." In light of recent messages and actions nationwide supporting respect for all peoples, please describe how you will move forward as a young adult to advocate for others and do your part to support equity and inclusion.**

Working toward equity and inclusion is something I value, partly because of the diverse community where I had the pleasure of growing up. I believe it's important to respect differences within a community, and Unalaska does not fail to deliver in the department of cultural diversity. It is one of the most diverse communities that I have seen. People come from all over the world for employment and bring their culture and language with them. One of my favorite events is the community center's Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration. Community members come together to celebrate diversity and show off their cultural artistry. At the get-together, American Soamaon community members may perform Polynesian dances, people from Mongolia sing while wearing their traditional garb, and people from the Philippines share their traditional folk dances. After the performances, everyone joins together to eat foods from various cultures. It is enough to bring some community members to happy tears, but mostly to bring us together. With so much diversity and a feeling of acceptance, there is never a lack of culture in our town.

People become more accepting through expressing themselves rather than living in a culturally claustrophobic community. While I may not be diverse or have any unique identities, I believe I am culturally aware and accepting of people from all backgrounds. It is essential to respect other people's cultures and uniqueness because they are part of their identity. Being culturally aware is the first step in moving forward to advocate for others.

Growing up in a small town makes you more connected with the community. Everyone in Unalaska knows each other, and most people are involved. Community involvement is the core value of our town. I believe that it is important to give back to your community, and as I have grown up here, I've started to take on more significant leadership roles. I joined Teen Council (a committee in our community center specializing in planning and organizing events for students), volunteered for the city library, and helped with many events that the town holds. I have even started coaching youth swim leagues. It soon came to the point where every event that the town had, I would be helping out with it to help other people enjoy it, just as I did when I was younger.

As I move forward toward college and eventually the workforce, I want to remember my roots and continue working with community involvement and making changes in our society. I'm not afraid to question authority and challenge the system to make changes when needed. We need to make sure all people are considered equal and feel included in their community. It takes all of us working together to make a significant movement like this happen. First, we all need to analyze our attitudes, involvement, and policies regarding equality. We also need to factor diversity into our day-to-day relations. We can do this at colleges, in business, and in our personal lives. We need to evaluate our practices and make changes as needed. As we look back

through history, it may seem that we have come a long way since slavery, segregation, and laws against people who are homosexual, but we still have a long way to go to get to a place where everyone can feel equal. To get where we need to be in our society, we must commit to social justice, which extends across generations and spans all disciplines. We need to accept an ongoing commitment to creating a better, more just world. We can be more inclusive of people from all backgrounds, get better at communicating about the existing barriers, and promote the use of resources and services that enable the commitment to the support and success of all community members and address concerns of discrimination and unfair treatment. Ensuring equity and inclusion in our society isn't something we can check off our to-do list; it will constantly be evolving and changing, so we need to stay on top of it and keep changing along with the progressive movement throughout our lives. My plan is to be part of that movement by supporting people in my community.