

# East End Women's Network

## Scholarship Essay

Respectfully submitted by Myra O'Neal

Why is it important for women to support one another?

Please address: 1.) What you have done to support and encourage other women or girls in your life. 2.)

What woman (or women) has made the strongest impact on your life by her support. 3.) Your personal perception regarding obstacles women face in achieving their goals.

As I have emerged as a young woman in today's society I have come to realize the true significance and impact that women have on the world. Many women in my life have helped to mold my worldview and help instill in me a commitment to continually strive for excellence. Locally, women like my mother, coaches, and doctors have had the most impact on my daily life and have taught me humility and how to persevere. Globally, women like Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama have given me the courage to stand strong with integrity and be a proud African American woman with a passion to help change the world. Being involved is very important to me; for as long as I can remember I have enjoyed helping and providing support to others. That is why a lot of my community service, especially over the past two years, has been in the form of mentorship to young junior high girls/budding athletes. As I sit and write this essay, I am reminded of how blessed I am to be able to say that I have completed 960.5 hours of community service. It is my goal to continue striving until I reach 1,000 hours – the millennium mark – before I complete my high school experience.

As I continue service in my community, I am presently working with a representative from the American Heart Association – the heart disease campaign will take place during the month of May. Even though I am volunteering my time to this community service project in an effort to educate women and men alike about the #1 killer of women, I am finding that I too am learning so much about the havoc this disease unfortunately bestows upon women. I plan on pushing the “Go Red” for women movement throughout my school district to educate everyone, especially women, about this preventable disease. As I become an adult, it is my belief that this vital information is not only needed by my peer group, young women in high school, but may be instrumental in saving the lives of women of all ages. Being a part of this effort already has been rewarding!!!!

Looking back, it would have been very easy to stop contributing to my community after completing the 30 hours required to graduate, but I knew that by continuing to volunteer and work in East Hampton, I would become a better citizen. Because of this, credit is given to St. Luke’s Episcopal Church and my parents who taught me about the importance of supporting others. I love interacting with people. I get a feeling of gratification when I help others. The route to happiness for me was learning to unselfishly give of myself.

Volleyball is another one of my passions, but I learned that even with mind over body I had to accept the limitations of my body—unfortunately my body lost in the battle to continue a career in athletics post high school. As my senior year started out I was a student athlete and was able to play volleyball, but my playing “career” was cut short due to injury and the ensuing hip surgery that followed. However, even through the pain and suffering I had to endure; I made the best of my circumstance. Coaching provided me with new opportunities; it actually helped to give me piece of mind. As a coach, I feel that I have made an important contribution to budding female athletes. Since 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I have looked forward to my service as a volunteer coach with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade girl’s volleyball team.

Teaching the girls the fundamentals of the game and providing the coach with a helping hand has always been gratifying. When I see the girls listening to the instructions that I give them, and then perform everything correctly, there's a rewarding feeling for everyone involved. Going to practices every day and helping the girls prepare for games has also helped me to see that I definitely want to coach volleyball after college, and maybe even back here in my hometown. I know that my work with the female athletes never went unnoticed and was much appreciated; the many thank you notes and gifts I received from the coach and the girls also made my recovery an easier process. Very few high school students in my school return back to their middle school athletic teams to volunteer with younger players, I am happy to be among those who do!

As mentioned earlier, there are many strong women in my life thus far that have influenced me for whom I must give credit. My number one supporter is my mom. My mom is a public servant who at times has had to dedicate more time to her work and community; she has had to make this sacrifice in order to provide a stable home for my family. Yet, as a mom, she always found the time to be there for me whenever I needed her. The fact that she learned to speak Spanish in order to help others in this community has inspired me to also learn the language. I plan on pursuing Spanish in college. A second strong woman from whom I received much support would be my high school physical education teacher/volleyball coach. She models a passion for the sport of girls volleyball that has strongly influenced and encouraged me to coach volleyball in the future.

In my opinion, at this stage in my life I would say there are no obstacles that can stop determined women from achieving their goals. I have seen women that have been very influential in my life be assertive and go after what they wanted in life. Women can accomplish just as much as men. With that in mind, I will be attending the University of Connecticut this fall. Receiving this scholarship would allow me to continue building on a

great foundation and support my journey into discovering who I am as a female leader and role model. This scholarship will also help aid me in realizing my dream: to return home after college and coach our future, little girls, like me who love the game of volleyball. My goal is to continue to study Spanish and use this bilingualism in my efforts to improve society. Fluency in Spanish will be beneficial here on the East End of Long Island especially as a tool to assist women and girls achieve their greatness. My support of women is now and will always be a cycling of the strong women that have influenced me and who have instilled in me the desire to make important contributions to our local and global communities.