

6/16/23

My experience at the Jennings Center has been one I'm profoundly grateful for. First and foremost, let me start off by saying that I'd never know that so many neighborhood kids could exist; this is my own fault as I'm a hermit in my shell. It brought so much joy to my spirit to see that kids are still very much kids — outside minding their business and not having a care at all in the world. Just within these few days, I've gotten to connect with the youth; I'm fond of their potential as they all have it within them. Whether they'll go on to be — amazing athletes, painters, motivational speakers, or simply... normal; they all will aspire in whatever path life takes them. When it comes to the staff — I hadn't much conversation with them. I think it having to do something with my age which is fine because by me not having the opportunity to get to know them I was able to observe. They have a very still-old-fashioned way of teaching — which to a person my age and from my life experiences... could be damned upon as a generational curse because it's a new world out there that needs being adapted to. The history of the Jennings Center has bewildered me; I didn't know of it

until my scholarship. It's community and the values set upon it are a beautiful thing. To know that the black community had a place to escape to when other places were prejudice in their heart makes me appreciate my center even more. I have no interest in becoming a teacher or anything having to do with kids at all. I sure am glad, however, that I was able to be a part of something so heartfelt with youth either way. This was an opportunity I'm thankful for and an experience I will carry with me for as long as I will.

Tyleah Nelson

The Jennings Center

Volunteering Experience

30 June 2023

My experience while doing community service at the Jennings Center was different but exciting for me. I say that because I never really worked with kids in that aspect. I've always babysat my younger cousins and when I did, it wasn't too often, but to see these kids every day over the last five days was new and a little rewarding. I have always had a passion for children and loved to watch them, so it was fun to be able to get inside their world and play with them. Over the course of five days with the kids I was able to make some friends and catch up with old mentors of mine.

I wanted to be as involved as possible and get to know the kids. Although I loved them all there was one who stood out to me the most, Zyon. He's a very sweet and smart little boy that I just admired him from the start. Zyon was kind to everyone, even me when he first met me, he had a whole conversation with me, and I was so impressed that he could talk better than I could. Watching him and even all the kids be so pure, play and have fun was refreshing. I built a relationship with him over my time at the center and I hope he always remembers that. There were more children who caught my attention, Promise, who even started to call me TT which is short for Auntie. Promise was another child who I loved to watch over my time being at the Jennings Center.

Lastly, I got to see a mentor of mine who I haven't seen in a long time, Mrs. Ayers. I was in her sister-to-sister group in middle school at Memorial Park. Seeing Mrs. Ayers, someone I was familiar with, made this experience even more comfortable for me. It was a full circle moment because being in her group in middle school I admired her for what she was doing for me and the students around me so to see her still being engaged with kids is amazing. It made me realize that this is something that I could still pursue. I can always give back to my community, which I have always wanted to do since being a kid.

Overall, this was a great opportunity for me, and I am so very thankful. I got to be a kid again and became involved with the youth of Fort Wayne. It really was a rewarding time. I hope I made a difference in these kids' lives. They had a huge impact on my life just as much as I tried to have one on theirs. I got to learn more about the center and its influence in our community. So, thank you to the staff and

Throughout the past few weeks, I was selected to receive the Al Jennings scholarship. In order to receive the scholarship, I had to complete twenty community service hours. I completed four hours a day for five days at the Jennings Center. I can truly say I enjoyed my experience to the point where I have applied for a job working part time. When I first started my hours, it was kind of hard to interact with the kids because they did not know me. Eventually they warmed up to me, especially the girls.

While I was there Mrs. Ayres and I taught them the fundamentals of cheerleading. With cheerleading you learn team bonding and it gives them the opportunity to be more active. We thought it would be the perfect way to include all the girls, younger or older. After seeing how much we had in common, the girls and I had grown a bond, especially the younger ones. We made Tik Toks, took selfies, etc. I really enjoyed my time with everyone and hopefully it does not have to end. I would like to thank Ms. Chantell and the rest of the board for this opportunity.

- - Jaya Swopshire

Makayla Johnson

I gained new perspectives during my 20 hours at the Jennings Center. This was truly my first time visiting a leisure facility because growing up, I never had the chance to do so after school or in the summer. Additionally, this was my first time working with kids, so everything was brand-new to me. Although I tried to keep to myself for the first few hours because I tend to be a bit of an introvert, the kids wouldn't have it. The children eventually made their way toward me and began asking me a thousand questions per minute. I had never encountered a group of children as active as these ones, so I knew I had my job cut out for me. Playing games with them was a lot of fun because I occasionally have a very childlike attitude. I participated in a 3v3 basketball game, learnt mancala, and raced them for a snack. Some of the kids and I even developed bonds, and some of them even referred to me as their sister. Overall, I had a great experience at the Jennings Center and will happily return to play with the kids there.