

Kaci Greene

Starting at a very early age, I have been a constant presence in my local library. When I was about two or three, my parents brought me to story time every Thursday. Here, from what I'm told, I engaged in multiple activities, including reading, blocks, and a group creative activity. As I grew older, the library became more than just a place for story time. I did research, read many forms of books and had fun. But I also viewed movies, embraced the cultural world of music, and most of all, found a place away from home where I felt comfortable. A second home if you will. Over this time period, I acquainted myself with all of the staff members and we became friends. We talked, laughed, and sometimes shared a drink (something "virgin" like water or juice). This collaboration and involvement fueled my curiosity to learn and discover more of the world around me.

Before I started middle school, I was given the opportunity to volunteer during the summer and help with the summer reading program. After all of the time I had spent at the library, this was one experience I was sure not to turn down. Being a newcomer was hard, but all of the other volunteers opened up to me. As children handed in their reading logs each week, I would see the smile on their faces and how much joy reading was bringing them. I was really amazed by how much the kids wanted to keep reading, even after the program finished. Seeing the joy the kids had reaffirmed the importance of learning and furthered my understanding of how crucial knowledge is to people.

Right before the start of high school, my local branch closed. A new mall just a block away was opening up and the mall wanted the library to relocate there. Overcome with grief, I turned to another branch of my local library district. Being at another branch let me meet new people, see new patrons, gain new insight, and really ground my foundation in learning. From that summer on, I thought of learning not only as school related, but also how somebody lives his/her life; a lifelong learner who ventures into the unknown, brings back information and shares it with everybody else.

Once the branch at the mall opened up, I continued my work as a volunteer there, and picked up shifts during the school year. The staff made me part of the family. Some team members retired and new ones took their place, and they became part of the family too. This last year working at the library has been both fulfilling and sad. I am leaving my home, my life, for some new grand adventure. All the

knowledge and drive that I picked up over those years I will take with me on my adventure through life. I don't know what's ahead but I know that the skills I learned at the library will carry me through to success.