

Jimmy Brazell Community Impact Scholarship Award

2017 Essay submission written by Ethan Rendell

President John F. Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." I may not have been able to do something for my country, but I started small by helping my community. After finishing school and homework, many kids play video games. To help draw kids outside and connect with others, my family built a gaga ball pit, which is a wood-fenced octagon about 16 feet in diameter. Our relationships with others has changed because of that gaga ball pit.

Creating the gaga ball pit strengthened relationships in our family. My brother, my parents, and even my grandfather helped build the gaga ball pit. From planning, to shopping, to building, everyone helped, and we had to communicate well, which helped our relationship as a family. Making the gaga ball pit and playing with others has made the gaga ball pit an adventure for our family.

When we first created our gaga ball pit, we had to introduce it to other people; at first it was slow, but as time progressed, our friends told their friends and more kids started to escape the clutches of their videogames. Even though we sacrificed hours planning, shopping, and building it was worth the effort. We invited our friends to come and play, but as people came, the gaga ball pit became crowded and it was harder for everyone to play. Weeks later, our neighbors approached us with a solution.

Their idea was to have us build a separate gaga ball pit, that way we could have two gaga ball pits and be able to separate bigger kids and smaller kids; therefore, the bigger kids wouldn't crush the little kids. Not only did the additional gaga ball pit allow us to separate smaller kids from bigger kids, but also meant more kids would come. The more the kids, the more the relationships with others, and the more relationships the more joy there is in the world. Since the second gaga ball pit was such a success, we were pleased with our work.

I remember one kid across the street in particular, he was an introvert who played by himself. We spent weeks asking him if he wanted to play with us. He never came, but one week we asked him and he actually came. Everyone was so overjoyed to see him play, but we wanted to know more. Even though we asked him questions about his name and how old he was he never answered, but we didn't stop trying. Finally, after weeks of trying he answered. His name was Cameron and he was 11 years old. Every time we came outside to play he came out to play with us. Our friendship grew even though it took weeks to happen.

When we moved, we gave our gaga ball pit to a neighborhood family. The family we gave the gaga ball pit to, uses it probably five times a day. We know that it is time for them to enjoy our gaga ball pit now. Our relationship with the family, that bought the gaga ball pit, has grown. But now, instead of us asking them to play in our gaga ball pit, they ask us to play in their gaga ball pit.

Our relationships with others have grown from the gaga ball pit. Since God has blessed us with a plentiful life we decided to give back to God by creating a gaga ball pit for the community. I may not be able to do an impacting thing for my country, but I can start small through my community by building a gaga ball pit.