

iWRITER

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BY KIDS FOR KIDS MAGAZINE



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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Having a community is key to survival. A community is key to the development of culture, of society, and of everything that makes us human. Our communities bind us together and it only makes sense that we repay them in any way we can. This is why the editorial board of the iWRITER chose community service as the theme for our October 2021 issue. This issue contains the greatest number of personal perspectives of any issue of the iWRITER yet, with several opinion pieces, lifestyle columns, and a lively poetry section. We also have an exciting announcement which ties in perfectly with our theme!

But I'm getting ahead of myself. I'll share a bit about my love of community service first. Each Family Literacy Night at which I have volunteered, each iWRITE Summer Camp at which I have mentored, each classroom visit I have taken has been a journey in itself. Each of these is a chance to help others grow by sharing my passion. Whether it's reading my work to a group of children or helping kids craft their first stories, it brings me joy to help others. Each of these events is an opportunity for both the mentor and mentee to grow in their storytelling abilities and to form bonds that will never break. I often meet students I have mentored years later. When they reminisce about their first written work, it feels great to know that they still treasure the small difference I made in their life and fuels me to make a difference in the lives of many more.

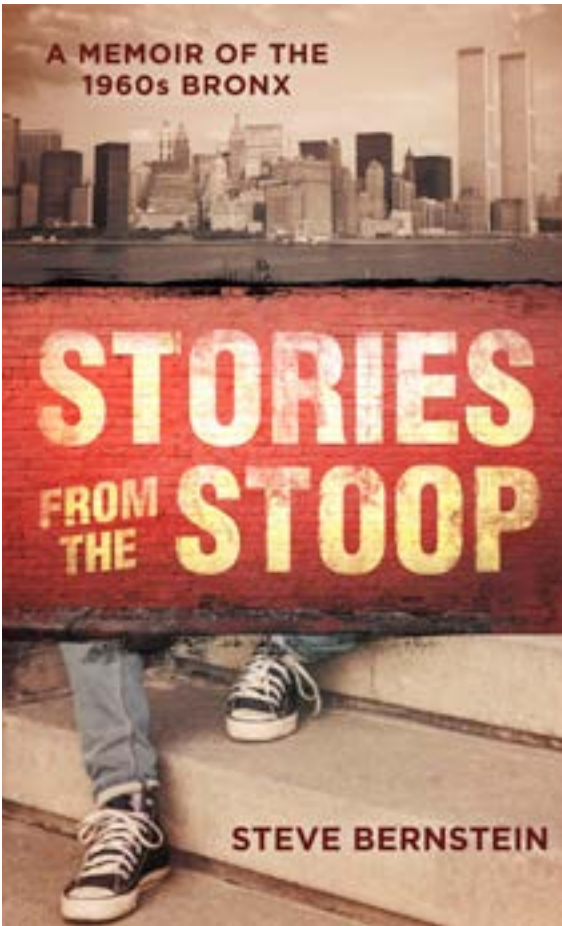
We also have a new editorial board for this school year, who have gotten off to a great start with this issue. I am so excited for the year ahead with this talented team of editors and writers.

Finally, I hope you enjoy the October 2021 issue of iWRITER magazine.

Happy reading!

Eshaan Mani

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that exhilarating experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public, but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.



contents

4 PAYING IT FORWARD

Announcing iWRITE Youth Club Workshops: 3 exclusive sessions with industry professionals this semester!

6 THE MEANING OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Prisha Shivani and Sophie Yu share their perspectives on giving back to the community.

7 HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITHIN HOUSTON

Kate-Yeonjae Jeong shares 8 ways to give back to the Houston community.

8 BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Shaivi Moparthy provides several benefits to giving back to your community.

8 SAVING THE WORLD, ONE BLADE OF GRASS AT A TIME

Abby Rogers reflects on her experience with CORAL Reef Alliance.

9 A NEW PASSION

Lexi Bumah crafts a short story themed around the importance of giving back to the community.

10 A PLACE FOR POETRY

Featured poems from the iWRITER Staff all about community, service, and community service.

12 THOUGHTS FROM THE TEAM

The iWRITER team shares a bit about what community means to them.

13 A WRITER MEETS FOOTBALL

David Liu recounts his experience attending his first football game and finding his place in an unfamiliar setting.

14 BOOK TALK

Eshaan Mani reviews Steve Bernstein's new memoir *Stories from the Stoop*, and Nia Shetty reviews *Secret Soldiers* by Kelley Hutton.



Paying it Forward

Announcing the Youth Club's newest initiative!

The image shows a promotional graphic for the iWRITE Youth Club's Semester 1 Workshops. It features three headshots of the workshop facilitators: Sheri Jacobs, Steve Bernstein, and Cathey Nickell. The text reads "iWRITE Youth Club! SEMESTER 1 WORKSHOPS" and "Spreading the love of literacy, one workshop at a time."

As a part of our mission, the iWRITE Youth Club strives to give back to the community by helping students across Houston and—thanks to the power of videoconferencing—the globe grow their writing skills. One way the club aims to do this is through the iWRITE Youth Club Workshops.

The iWRITE Youth Club Workshops are a series of 45- to 60-minute masterclasses with a diverse group of seasoned professionals from various backgrounds, including education, public relations, journalism, novel writing, and playwriting. Students will have the chance to hear these individuals speak about their backgrounds and hone a different skill during each session, such as using a strong narrative voice and creating your own distinct brand.

There's something for everyone in these workshops: those who have just entered the world of writing and those who are experts; those who are passionate about fiction, and those who are immersed in college essays; for those who love journalism and those who enjoy writing poetry.

Each iWRITE Youth Club Workshop, intended for students in grades 6-12, costs \$45 live and \$30 recorded. All proceeds from the workshops will be used to support the iWRITE Nonprofit Organization's projects.

Reflective Writing: Finding Insight, Empowerment, and Peace with Sheri Jacobs (author, educator, and actor)
October 30, 2021 | Webinar

Feeling like the figurative walls are closing in? While our outer world continues to change, it can seem challenging to navigate the inner

terrain of our psyche. In this workshop, Sheri will share a reflective writing tool that will reignite the inner compass that we all possess. When we consider writing through the lens of self-reflection, we create a bridge between our outer and inner worlds. Strengthen your intuition and ignite your creativity in this meditative writing course.

Finding Your Voice and Coming of Age with Steve Bernstein (author of *Stories from the Stoop*)
December 4, 2021 | Webinar

Steve Bernstein tells the story of his unique life in his new memoir *Stories from the Stoop* with a strong, colorful narrative voice marked by his Bronx accent (yes, you can hear it through the paper!). In this 45-minute session, he'll teach you how to turn moments from your life, pivotal or everyday, and create a compelling story with your own distinct voice... just like he did! You'll also receive your own personal copy of Steve's book. Check out our review of Steve's memoir in the Book Talk section.

All about Branding in Publishing with Cathey Nickell (children's author and speaker)
January 29, 2022 | Webinar

Cathey Nickell is the author of several children's books, including Arthur Zarr's *Amazing Art Car*, and has worked across fields like journalism, public relations, and nonprofit organizations. In this workshop, Cathey wants to share with you some tidbits of wisdom about branding and publishing... and so much more!

For more information, please visit <https://www.iwriteyouthclub.com/workshops> or contact iWRITE's Education Manager, Sheri Jacobs at sheri@iwrite.org. We hope you'll join us at these fun and educational sessions!

Reflective Writing: Finding Insight, Empowerment, and Peace with Sheri Jacobs

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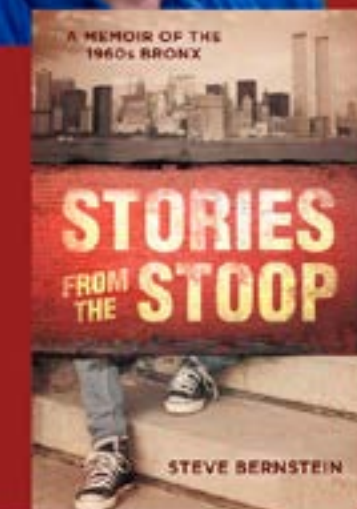


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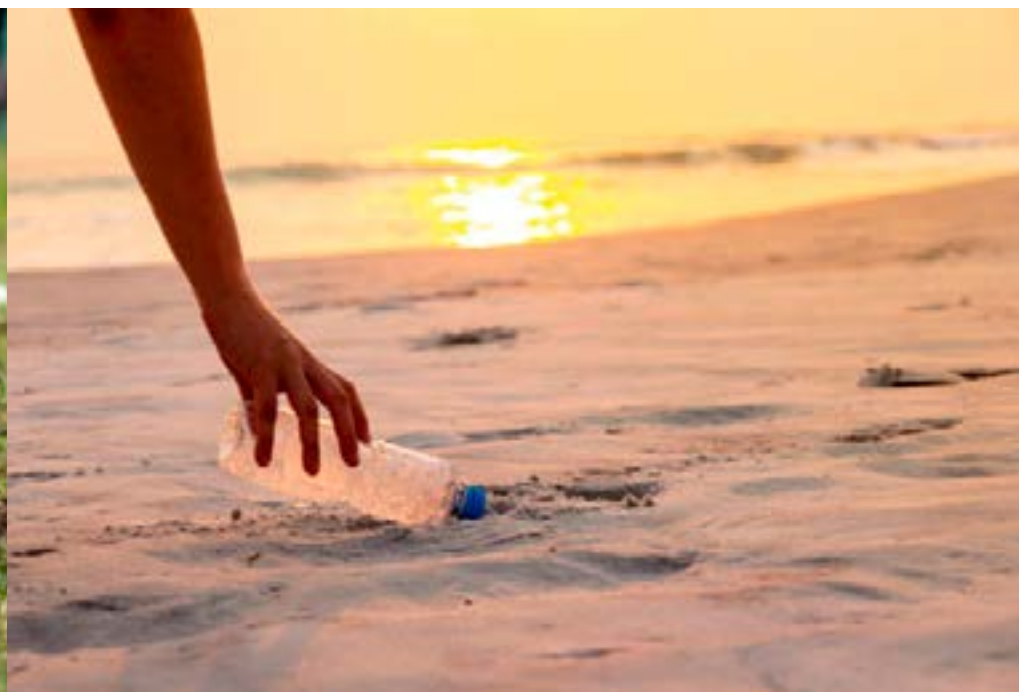


December 4, 2021 | Webinar

BY Eshaan Mani

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that exhilarating experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.

The Meaning of Community Service



Community service according to Webster's Dictionary is "work that is done without pay to help people in a community." It teaches us compassion, as well as core values such as respect and kindness. Community service allows us to embrace our community and the people around us. As well as teaching us empathy, community service can bring a sense of togetherness, and ultimately bring us closer to one another.

Recently, we went on a school trip to Galveston to clean up the beach. This is part of community service.

Actions such as picking up one another's trash, and looking after the waste we generate can lead to such a huge difference and are extremely beneficial to the environment. There was an excess of trash scattered across the bay, which made us realize how much harm we are doing to our ecosystem. From bottle caps to straws, there were a variety of articles of trash found. Hundreds of minuscule plastic bits were hidden under thick layers of

sand and dotted all around the surface. We watched as many bags were soon, one after another, filled with litter consisting of cigarettes, wires, juice boxes, etc.

Carol Giorgi, a student at Emery Weiner, said, "My experience going to the beach with Emery helped me understand the importance of taking care of the environment and how somewhere as close as Galveston Beach needs our help!"

Our school had a talk about straws, and how they can affect the environment drastically. It's a common item we find in restaurants, fast food places, and almost every supermarket and grocery store. They displayed a video of a turtle found with an object stuck in one of its nostrils. It was a plastic straw. This could happen and is happening to many sea creatures, currently and historically, and considering how many plastic straws are being thrown away every day, it will continue to happen.

What are some things that we can do? Some things that were proposed were the usage of stainless-steel straws

and paper straws. Although they can cost a bit more than the typical plastic straws, they can help the living animals in the sea so much more. Companies like Starbucks have begun to provide strawless lids for a majority of their drinks, making an effort to help our community.

Just as our community supported and nurtured us, we need to do the same. By committing ourselves to these small acts of compassion, we can alter our society as a whole in the long run.

What do you think community service means? What are some things that you can do for your community?

CO-WRITTEN BY Sophie Yu
I WRITE to let my thoughts, feelings, and ideas spread across the paper. To form and create a story that can be told in any perspective, described with any words. Writing can create a whole new world.

CO-WRITTEN BY Prisha Shiwani
IWRITE because it is a creative way of expressing your thoughts and ideas through words. You can make your reader visualize any scene or setting. There are also no limits to writing, meaning you can be yourself and create absolutely whatever you want.

How To Get Involved Within Houston

The beautiful, diverse city of Houston has a myriad of opportunities for teens to volunteer. You can explore so many different fields and give back to your community in so many ways! Without further ado, here are eight ideas of how you can give back to our city:

Houston Food Bank

The Houston Food Bank is America's largest food bank. At the facility, you can work behind the scenes with the machinery on processing, sorting, boxing, and more. As a volunteer, you are able to take part in packing together a meal for those in need. With a non-complicated system that is well-suited for young adults, the Houston Food Bank is a great way for the youth to engage in community service.

Evelyn's Park Conservancy

Evelyn's Park is a nature conservatory and 501(c)(3) non-profit that focuses on beautifying communities and providing a place of rest for all. Located in the Bellaire neighborhood, this park is known to many as the perfect yoga spot, speed-walking destination, or a spot to play games with friends. At Evelyn's Park, you can volunteer as a Teen Ambassador to bring together events and work on publicity.

Books Between Kids

With Books Between Kids, you can share your love for reading with children who don't have access to books. Through the organization, you can build home libraries for at-risk children. As a volunteer, you will collect books in good condition to be placed into a new, loving home. All collected books will be sent to a book fair "celebration" for children to pick out books to read. With Books Between Kids, you can further promote the love of literacy.

Houston Pets Alive

With Houston Pets Alive, you are able to make a difference in saving the lives of sheltered animals from euthanasia. The organization links you to a variety of volunteer opportunities to partake in (some come with age requirements) from dog-focused opportunities to fundraising. You can also help match pets to foster homes while in search of finding a permanent stay, help with reducing strays, and more. With Houston Pets Alive, you can help the pets find their forever home!

Friends of Texas Wildlife

If you love animals, especially wildlife, this one is perfect for you. To volunteer with Friends of Texas Wildlife, you can either work in the administrative department or as a rehabilitator. Through the organization, you can take an active part in their mission to care for "injured, displaced, or orphaned wildlife" and promote education regarding wildlife.

Kids' Meals

With Kids' Meals, you will be preparing meals for children in hunger. Volunteers ages 12 and up can work behind the scenes as kitchen help through putting together sandwiches and snacks. Volunteers ages 8 and up can prepare lunch in the "packing center." Other opportunities include food preparation. If you're over the age of 21, you can volunteer to personally drive and deliver meals to children.

Buffalo Bayou Partnership

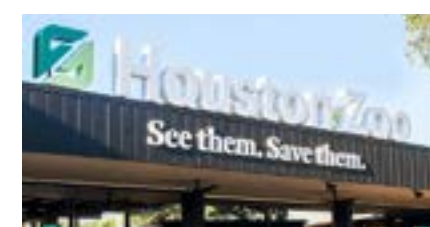
The Buffalo Bayou Partnership is a non-profit with its efforts focused on beautifying the bayou and keeping the natural resource in a safe, clean environment. As a volunteer, you can assist in various tasks such as weeding, spreading mulch, planting native plants, removing litter, and more.

The Houston Zoo

Did you know that the Houston Zoo has its own teenage team? Called the Zoo Crew, teens are able to get involved while learning about the wild and advocate for important causes. The Zoo Crew is a team of teenagers who are driven by the cause of promoting positive changes for wildlife.

BY Kate Jeong

I WRITE because I have a passion for being able to share my reflections and thoughts with others. I write so I can share the spark that writing's joys give with many other interested students.



Benefits of Community Service

There are numerous benefits of community service. Community service and volunteering can help us develop stronger friendships and social networks. Giving to others can help us stay both mentally and physically active and healthy. Volunteering and acts of kindness can help reduce stress and anxiety while also providing a sense of purpose. It helps boost our self-confidence and self-esteem and gives us an opportunity to give back to the community.

When you contribute to the overall health of people, you can make the biggest difference. It's an incredibly rewarding and life-changing experience.



Here are four ways that community service can help you in your day-to-day life:

Decreases depression

Volunteering can help decrease depression. A common source of depression is isolation, which many of us have experienced during the pandemic.

Volunteering regularly keeps you in social contact and can increase your self-esteem.

Brain function

Community service also helps you stay mentally active! A study by John Hopkins University shows that those who volunteer have increased brain function.

Volunteering gets you on your feet while also having you think at the same time.

Reduces stress

Doing community service reduces stress levels. Through helping others, you feel better about yourself. Dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and happiness, is released in your brain, which is an effect that makes you happier. The more you volunteer, the happier you become!

Learn something new

When doing community service, you are always learning something new! Through community service, you can develop leadership skills, self-confidence, and get better at communicating.

BY Shaivi Moparthy

I WRITE because writing is a way for me to express myself and it helps me connect to my artistic side. I enjoy writing because it allows me to reflect on experiences that I have encountered. Writing is something that I truly enjoy, and it has always been one of my greatest passions.

A New Passion

“Mhm, ok, Amber. I have to go, so I’ll call you back later. Maybe,” joked Amir.

“Anyways,” Amber’s eye roll could be heard through the phone, “Call me when you get back, bestie.” The two hung up.

“Amir!” His dad’s voice rang out through the hallway. “Get off the phone and hurry up!”

“Here I come!” Amir responded.

Amir and his dad hurriedly got in the car and went to his community service event: cleaning the local grocery store parking lot.

“I don’t see the point in having to get ‘community service hours’,” Amir whined. “Don’t they have volunteers who do that type of stuff?”

“I can turn this car around right now if you aren’t going to help while you’re there.” Amir’s dad side-eyed him.

“I mean, you can if you want,” Amir shrugged. “I just don’t really see the point.”

Later that night, around 9:00, Amir heard his dad calling him.

Amir hustled downstairs. As he approached the first flight of steps, he started to hear the news anchor say something about an incident. Amir read the headline on the screen: ‘Senior citizen narrowly avoids fatal incident.’ The TV blared, “Earlier this evening, a senior citizen almost suffered a fatal injury at a local grocery store. I say almost because it just so happened that a high schooler on a community service trip managed to save him. I’ll pass it onto Abra to give you the full scoop.”



The TV flashed to a screen showing Amir’s classmate standing next to his grandfather.

“Is that Dada?” Amir started to say before the TV quickly cut him off.

“Today in Lakeville, Amir Sr., a resident at the Lakeville Nursing Home, was getting off the transportation bus to go into the nearby grocery store when he tripped over a piece of debris and almost fell. Luckily, Lakeview high school student, Dakota, was nearby and able to help steady Mr. Dutta. Dakota is here, along with some of her fellow classmates, for a community service event. If Dakota wasn’t nearby, who knows what could have happened to the senior? Signing off, Abra, with Channel 2 News.”

Amir turned to his dad in disbelief; his father returned the shocked expression. As the two were marveling at one another, Amir heard a ding from his phone. He looked down to see a text from his friend Amber.

"Hey, are you going to the community service thing tomorrow? I think you can get up to 5 hours."

BY Lexi Bumah

I WRITE because writing for me is a mental massage and an authentic way to express myself. In-person I'm shy. When I have the opportunity to write, I find it exhilarating. I love having the ability to convey my feelings, without feeling uncomfortable.



Saving the World, One Blade of Grass at a Time



BY Abby Rogers

IWRITE because I am passionate about spreading awareness about topics I care about. Being able to share knowledge and other people's experiences with others through writing is very important to me.

I have always been passionate about wanting to help the environment, but I didn’t know how to start. I began by making small changes to my lifestyle to make it more eco-friendly. I no longer grab a plastic straw at a restaurant or a plastic bag at the grocery store. However, it didn’t seem like enough to make a real change. I wanted to see my impact first-hand.

Then, I discovered an amazing volunteer opportunity with [CORAL Reef Alliance](#). I had the opportunity to grow native Hawaiian grasses that would later be transplanted to the barren areas of the island. Transplanting these grasses would prevent sediment from entering the ocean and smothering coral reefs.

I started with just three trays that grew 50 native grasses.

However, I loved growing the grasses so much that I decided to undertake even more! Currently, I have grown over 900 native Hawaiian grasses. It’s amazing to be able to see the impact I’m making.

I encourage kids to find their cause. If everyone focuses on what they’re passionate about, we can help the environment thrive.

A Place for Poetry

Featured poems from the iWRITER staff

THE AWAKENING

I sit in the fourth row of people,
Their necks craned slightly upwards
As the community service project is
announced.

My thumbs twiddle involuntarily
While my mind takes me to places
Far away from chair number 8 in the fourth
row.

Raising money for the hungry children,
sending it as one big
Donation. Alerting the masses.
Keeping faith.

Why do we do such things?

I pose that question
To my mom,
And she tells me something new.

“The temple community unites
To give aid to those who need it;
You too can be a part of their cause.”

For days I research,
For hours I ponder,
For weeks I traverse the neighborhood.

I want to find a reason behind it all.

Trash fills the ocean water,
Smog and humidity drench the atmosphere,
An elementary school hangs by a thread.

Such imperfections dominate my field
Of vision, leaving me blind to solutions on
how To improve them.

My mom listens as I tell her more.
“There’s so much outside our backyard
That I want to amend.

The dogs on the street.
The lawns, overdue for a mow.
Surely this is not my ego acting up?”

My mom tells me,
“Wishing peace and stability in others’
lives is never selfish. What you do after
determines how selfless you are.”

I now have the answer
To my question.
Through coaxing and guidance,
an inner voice spoke aloud for the first time.

And tomorrow is Sunday.

I turn in my check into the box,
I fold my hands,
And I pledge allegiance

To give to the community. Whatever I can.
The camps, the homes, the universities.
The athletes, the writers, the moonlighters.

What service am I capable of?



BY Sanjna Pandit
I WRITE because writing cultivates my ability to be eloquent and express my feelings and ideas. I learn more and more about myself with every new thought that I put on paper. My mind forces me to enter a whole new realm of imagination and discoveries that I never knew I could reach.

THE DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

com mu ni ty serv ice
/kə'myoondē 'sərvəs/
noun

voluntary work intended to help people in a
particular area.
"opportunities to engage in community service"

when we all gather to unify as one,
the reformation of a community,
the act of giving back to us

like planting seedlings and saplings
watering the joy as it quickly sprouts

like picking up the forgotten litter
and remembering the greenery

like patting the recovering kitten
and leading it to a forever home

we are unified by our hearts,
as community service makes us whole.



BY Kate Jeong
I WRITE because I have a passion for being able to share my reflections and thoughts with others. I write so I can share the spark that writing's joys give with many other interested students.

THE DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

There once was a stream
Slender and virulent
With many a quaint seam
Of life and merriment

There lived a rabbit
White and soft as snow
Who had quite a habit
Of visiting this meadow

There, one day he slumbered
And along came a snake
Approaching unencumbered
Of course, the rabbit wakes

There the rabbit sprung up
But the snake implored
That the rabbit must hold up
Of this, he said and scored

There live wolves here
And indeed the rabbit saw
On inspection their smear
Of paws and claw

There he knew it true
And thanked him
So, they cut through
Of spirits to the brim

BY Austin Lopez
I WRITE because I have words to say and a passion with which to say them. I love the old Star Wars, Percy Jackson, and AJR. I'm also a firm believer that everything isn't as it seems.

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING: A Renga BY THE IWRITER TEAM

Sanjna Pandit

Giving and taking,
constant companions; how to
differentiate?

Austin Lopez

A kind hand outstretched
to pass on hope, strength, & warmth
then outstretched once more

Nia Shetty

They extend their hearts
into our lives, only warmth
fills the autumn air.

Sophie Yu

We are connected
Protecting this precious bond,
We stand together.

Kate Yeonjae-Jeong

Giving back to what
raised us since the beginning,
the community.

Eshaan Mani

For a new candle,
with wax of strength, belief, light,
which they give away.

Shaivi Moparthi

To provide comfort,
and lend a kind helping hand,
is what unites us.

Prisha Shivani

Coming together
Kindness, compassion, empathy
inspiring a change

Thoughts from the Team

Kate-Yeonjae Jeong

We are all part of a community that unifies us together as one. The act of giving back signifies the idea of adding onto what has given us all so much and the beauty of positive impact. Community service leads to a heartwarming feeling, and it can touch many lives.

Austin Lopez

Community is about unity; community is about helping those who need help the most. Community, to me, means committing yourself to aiding the world and those around you through whatever means are available to you.

Sanjna Pandit

I'm grateful to be a part of various different communities, whether it be my family, a sports team or the Houston area. As we continue our autumn journey, I think about how to give back to these groups without expecting anything in return, the essence of selfless service.

Shaivi Moparthi

Through community service, we can connect with others and give back to our community. When we practice small acts of kindness, it promotes empathy and releases positivity. It teaches us compassion, kindness and understanding, and the importance of making a difference in people's lives.

Sophie Yu

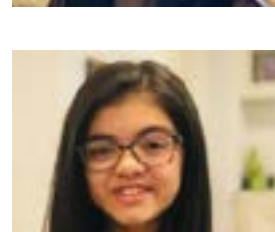
A community is what binds us together. It's something that connects us and teaches us to embrace our community. Giving back is such an important part of our lives as we grow up in a supportive environment. The smallest actions can change the world in so many ways. It brings us closer to one another, weaving new bonds and strengthening the old ones.

Prisha Shivani

A community is made of components that make it whole. From the people in it to the way they bond and interact with each other to help their society become a better place for all, to the strengthening of our compassion and empathy, community service can help us grow together in so many different ways.

David Liu

On a more personal level, community service is an environment for building fun relationships. It allows for loosened restrictions and personalities to flourish; jokes, conversations laced with friendly banter, and activities allow for special relations to grow within communities. Community service is a river, it meanders and winds but in doing so provides vital connections to grow.



A Writer Meets Football



What comes to mind when I say football? Brawny men tackling each other, teams clashing against each other in a fierce war for a ball.

And what comes to mind when I say writer? A scrawny geek typing furiously on their computer, their body hunched over in war with a keyboard.

Mixing the two, an uptight, introverted writer, with a football game, a demonstrably loud and extroverted activity, I thought, was a disaster waiting to happen.

I, for most of middle school, have avoided community games. The pandemic only gave me more reason to skip out on games. But with COVID-19 seemingly waning and the hype of the first football game of the year egging me on, I threw caution to the wind and decided to go to my first high school football game.

There I sat, alone, with the cheers and screams from the home team ringing synchronously to the uncertainty from my mind. Was I supposed to sit or stand? Was it too awkward for me to sit alone?

To the few I spoke to, a rush of uncertainty and uneasiness muddled my usually eloquent responses. The debater who had spoken

adamantly about the superiority of farming societies in history class covered in this new environment.

I glanced around timidly. Everyone seemed to be having a great time. Loud cheers punctuated the touchdowns from the team, peoples' voices only seemed to be singing the same high pitch, and laughter ran amok among the crowd.

It seemed that laughter wasn't a friend of mine.

A brisk wisp of color caught my attention from across the field. Near the baseball field, kids were racing and passing footballs. I stood and walked to the baseball field, observing the kids' carefree demeanor and feeling the climate permeate me. Here, I felt that I had found my corner, my nook where I could feel comfortable. The kids, I knew, wouldn't judge me or find me awkward.

Wandering around, I saw two kids vainly attempting to retrieve their ball, wedged in between the plywood and the fence. Offering to help, the two kids and I took turns jumping as high as we could to unwedge the ball. Gradually, our jumps inched further and further away from the ball and closer to a competitive game where we compared our jump heights.

Finally, we came up with a plan for one of them to get on my back and pull the ball loose. With their legs around my neck and with a cry of success, one of the kids loosened the ball from its position, and it fell to the ground victoriously.

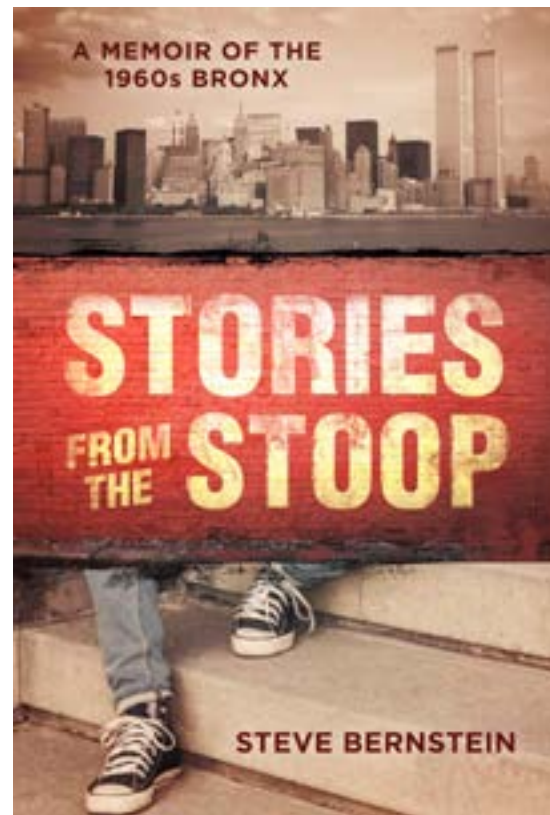
After, the two kids — George and Michael — and I goofed around. We made up childish games, and I discovered that George liked Magic the Gathering even more than I do. Our discussion of the flaws of the digital Magic the Gathering filled the evening, and by the time I had returned back to my seat, there were three minutes left until the game ended. I returned to my seat and watched the game unfold.

I looked to my left and saw a boy with ruffled hair who was cheering while whispering and talking to his many friends. I knew the old me would never actually think of befriending this stranger. The new me, however, had an itching question: who knows what we might have in common?

BY David Liu

I WRITE to help others escape to worlds full of color with characters of energy and nuance. To create a place where someone can find refuge, if only just for a few seconds, is something I love to do.

BOOK TALK



Stories from the Stoop is a raw, at times irreverent portrayal of a life well-lived. Full of sweet relationships, the occasional formative fight, and one incredible odyssey, this memoir by Steve Bernstein is one you will not want to put down!

Bernstein grew up in the Bronx in the 1960s, an era of racial tension and violence, and much of the book centers around his childhood. Growing up with an alcoholic father and timid mother, his home life wasn't great, but his friendships, lovers, and enemies on the streets taught him a lot about life. Bernstein was an anomaly both where he lived in the South Bronx and the North Bronx: in the South, he had to blend in with the Puerto Rican and African-American members of his neighborhood, while in the North he was discomfited by the racist attitudes of the mafioso-like guys who always seemed to be nearby. But in the end, his buddies were always there for him.

When visiting a friend in Delaware, Bernstein came to know about how bad the racial divide was in other parts of the country; just one train ride away, he was being waited on hand and foot and looked at quizzically – and slightly condescendingly – for spending time with his African-American friends. Another story with a friend leads to them bicycling to Canada and back from New York City, pitching their tent in a dump, and spending time in a hippie commune. And with this very friend, Bernstein has a story about 9/11 which will pull at your heartstrings.

Interested? You should be!

Stories from the Stoop is certainly a magnificent piece of work, and you can tell that Bernstein poured his heart and soul onto the page in the creation of this memoir. The language is simple and

clear, and though there is some profanity that limits my reader recommendation (skip below for that... but don't), the messages he teaches are universal.

I loved that Bernstein, by his own description, said he is “a lover, not a hater,” an attitude which at times both helped and harmed him during his childhood; it's especially important to have this attitude in the time we live in. Another set of traits I will certainly say helped him were determination, toughness, and commitment – all values that one only gains after facing serious adversity.

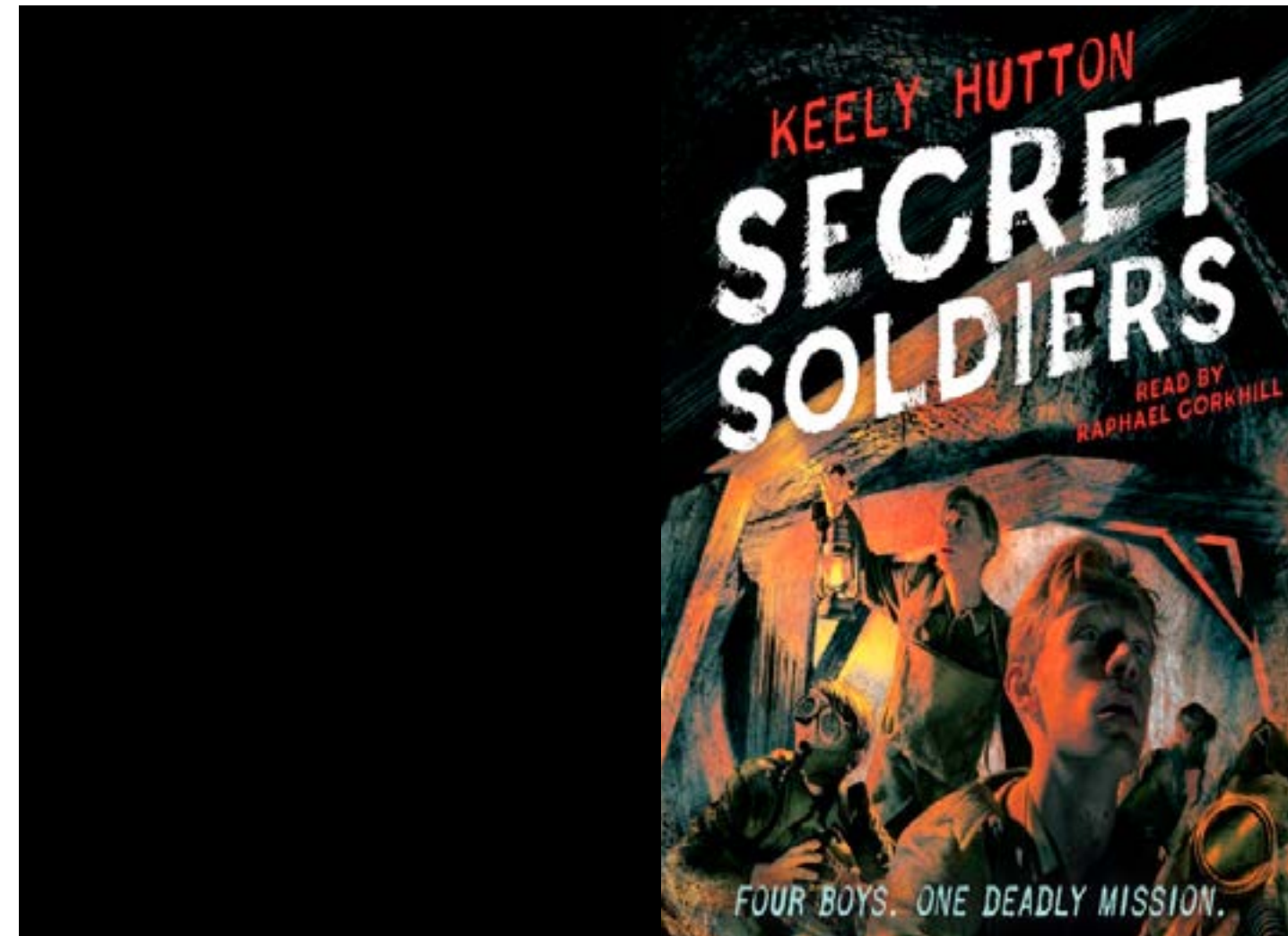
Readers will also appreciate Bernstein's willingness to laugh at himself, and the book has some pretty funny moments. But above all, the literary element I love most about *Stories from the Stoop* is his strong narrative voice; you truly feel like he's right there, chatting with you and telling you about his life. The only thing I really want right now is a volume focusing more on Steve's adult life – I'm sure there are some intriguing stories there, as he has gone from working as a plumber to a youth advocate to an author!

I give *Stories from the Stoop* 5 out of 5 stars and recommend it for ages 14 and up. Buy the book [here](#). We have a workshop with Steve Bernstein coming up as well; if you'd like a free copy of his book and to learn how to weave events from your life into your own coming-of-age story with a strong narrative voice head to iwriteyouthclub.com/workshops.

BY Eshaan Mani

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that exhilarating experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.

Secret Soldiers by Keeley Hutton



A missing family member. A war rampaging the entire world. A young boy ready to lie in order to fight. This is the life Thomas, a 13-year-old Irish miner is living in the midst of World War I. In *Secret Soldiers* by Keeley Hutton, you go on a journey with Thomas as he fights and keeps secrets to find his brother.

The minimum age to enlist in the British Army is 18. But Thomas, only 13, is intent on joining the army to leave behind poverty and find his

missing brother. He joins the army illegally with the help of George, a homeless child. They're joined by quiet Charlie and stuck-up Eton student, Frederick. When they arrive, they discover that they are not fighting on the front line but underneath it. Though their actual mission is a secret, they dig trenches day in and day out.

Thomas spends his nights searching for his brother and is gradually joined by George, Charlie, and Frederick. They might be completely different

people with different backgrounds, but in war none of that matters. That's why they come together as the Secret Soldiers.

Community comes in many forms and this book represents one of them. Community means being able to come together in rough times and that's exactly what takes place in this novel.

In a time of war, you need to set aside your differences and make new bonds, just like in *Secret Soldiers*. A key lesson

from this book is learning to work with those who aren't like you.

I would rate it 5 out of 5 stars for the great themes and humor in the novel. I would recommend it for kids 10 and up. Hope you enjoy *Secret Soldiers* by Keeley Hutton, a book

BY Nia Shetty

I WRITE because of the joy I feel, when I put a new idea down on paper. To be able to bring feelings and emotions to the reader, through ideas that I get to express.



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