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Original Student Draft

Common App personal statement sample - 378 words

Prompt

Share an essay on any topic of your choice.

The Bike Cooperative

Every Saturday morning, I volunteer at the Eastside Bike Cooperative. I first joined because I needed service hours, but I quickly became interested in fixing bikes. On my first day, I did not know the difference between a derailleur and a cassette. I mostly sorted donated parts and watched the older volunteers work.

After a few weeks, one of the mechanics, Luis, showed me how to patch a tube. I ruined the first two patches because I did not wait for the glue to get tacky. The third one held. I remember feeling proud when the tire stayed firm. After that, I started watching repair videos at home and practicing on bikes that had been donated for parts.

By the spring, I could do basic tune-ups on my own. I liked taking something that did not work and making it useful again. I also enjoyed meeting the people who came to the cooperative. Some needed bikes to get to work, while others wanted an inexpensive way to get around. I learned that a bike can be more than recreation because it can help someone get where they need to go.

One Saturday, a woman brought in a blue commuter bike with a chain that kept slipping. I adjusted the rear derailleur and replaced the worn cable. When I tested it in the alley, the gears finally shifted without jumping. The woman told me she had been taking two buses to her morning shift while the bike was broken. I was glad that I had helped her, and the experience made me realize the importance of using technical skills to help other people.

The cooperative has taught me patience, problem-solving, and the value of community service. Repairs do not always work the first time, so I have learned to slow down and check each part of the system. I have also learned that small actions can have a large impact on someone else's life.

In college, I hope to continue volunteering and studying engineering. Engineering interests me because it combines creativity with practical problem-solving. My experience at the bike cooperative has shown me that I want to build things that improve people's everyday lives. I know the persistence I developed there will help me succeed in college and beyond.

Context

This draft is competent and sincere. The opportunity is not a dramatic rewrite; it is a clearer center of gravity and more specific reflection.