**Prompt 7 - What have you done to make your school or your community a better place? (350 words)**

Their eyes lit up one by one as they opened their packages, revealing their own custom basketball jersey. Seeing the mirth in them as they put on their jerseys filled me with immense joy.

Wanting me to engage more with the community, my mom brought me to a local orphanage home to 8 kids and only one caretaker. As I spent my summer break helping out at the orphanage, I realized each child had built an emotional barrier from the trauma of their parent’s abandonment. Breaking down their walls became my goal and I thought I should start with basketball to cheer them up.

I donated a portable basketball hoop and visited the kids during weekends. With every dribbling and shooting class, I could sense their walls slowly crumbling as they started to enjoy basketball. Adih, one of the orphans, however, was still reluctant, refusing to talk and play with the others. I would try to spend time every visit to talk to him privately. I would even share vulnerable stories of mine to show that he wasn’t alone and sometimes show him interesting movies and TV shows.

 Weeks following, I wanted to enhance their basketball experience so I hosted fundraisers to try to renovate the nearby public basketball court currently in ruins and buy new equipments including new shoes and practice equipments

 One day, I came to the orphanage to bring the kids to the newly renovated court only to see the caretaker and no one else in the house.

“Ms. Tina, wheres everybody?”

“They’re all at the court,”

“Adih?”

“Yup him too” She chuckled

I rushed to the court and saw Adih playing together with the others. When he noticed me, he ushered me to everyone and gave me the ball. At that moment, I realized that this wasn’t just an invitation to a game, but also a representation of his willingness to embrace friendship. Adih was slowly but surely recovering.

Seeing the orphans continuously grow their character through basketball made me feel grateful how much they’ve been impacted by such a simple sport. Basketball became a window for them to have fun and let out their bottled- up emotions. This inspired me to start the Buddy program, a program dedicated to introducing sports to orphans and primary students in hopes of helping others like Adih.