Our families and communities often define us and our individual worlds. Community might refer to your cultural group, extended family, religious group, neighborhood or school, sports team or club, co-workers, etc. Describe the world you come from and how you, as a product of it, might add to the diversity of the UW. (300 words)

I became interested in basketball since the sixth grade. Not long after, I joined a basketball club called “Sahabat” – an Indonesian word for friend – wanting to improve my skills. It was comprised of peers my age from different schools with a two-hours daily dose of drills and scrimmages five days a week. From a loner to a team player, from shy to sociable, from timid to confident: I owe this all to “Sahabat.”

Initially, I was just a self-conscious kid playing ONLY for self-improvement, so does everyone. As a result, “Sahabat” kept suffering losses. I asked myself, “Why do we keep losing?” Basketball is a team sport, improving one’s skill is important, but growing as a team is even more so. Thus, I put more efforts into interacting with my “Sahabat” peers: getting to know them through chit-chats, making jokes together, sharing our day-to-day lives, and, eventually, going out for team dinners.

These so-called “strangers” started to feel like family. This is when I learned about their different backgrounds. It was gratifying to see how all of that don’t matter. Our chemistry have bridged our differences into one cohesive unit: a TEAM. Next thing we know, “Sahabat’s” wins gradually improved as our chemistry and teamwork got stronger. As a side product, I see myself as not a loner, but someone with lots of friends.

I owe my personal growth to “Sahabat.” It changed me from a recluse to a more sociable person, allowed me to develop empathy towards differences, and made me more confident! The current me has made an impact to my team as the motivator that incites friendly competitiveness: skills plus bonds equal teamwork plus wins. I’m confident that I can also contribute to UW and make an impact to your student body as I will make sure to build awareness of different backgrounds and embrace every shy, self-conscious people I meet and encouraged them to step outside of their comfort zone and explore.