6: Submit a one-page essay that focuses on the DCU motto which is:  “People come first.  Do the right thing.  Make a difference.” Up to $7500 split among winners

The DCU motto “People come first. Do the right thing. Make a difference.” is a great maxim to live by, and I have been doing so throughout my high school career. I try to focus on helping people, doing the right thing whenever possible, and making as much of a positive difference as I can. I do this through my Church, environmental club, robotics club, and personal volunteering at Special Olympics.

My church has a few days dedicated to volunteer work annually. Early this past year, we volunteered around a few community parks to help with cleanup and maintenance. The year before, we focused on helping a soup kitchen by volunteering to clean and serve the guests. At every volunteer opportunity, we focus on helping those who need it. We do the right thing by helping when nobody else will, and we try to make a difference in our community.

Another great opportunity to make a change is in our school’s environmental club. We have made quite a few environmentally healthy changes to our community. We collaborated with another club to set up compost bins to reuse organic waste. We also shined a light on our school’s poor recycling habits and had them changed them for the better. All the changes we make are focused on the students and staff of Merrimack High School. We are trying to make a safer, healthier, and more environmentally conscious school. Our most recent project has involved removing Styrofoam trays from our lunchroom. We learned about the negative effects of Styrofoam on both the environment and on the human body and decided that a change had to be made. We are currently working on meeting with district administrators to make the change. Our main goal is to make a positive difference in our high school, so we leave it better than it was when we were freshmen.

The school robotics team has also allowed me to make a difference in the community by helping to distribute no-touch-tools during the pandemic. Some members of the team own 3D printers and volunteered to print tools to do everyday tasks to prevent contact and slow the spread. I helped distribute these around during our team events. We decided that it would be important to make a positive difference by making everyday interactions like opening and closing doors and pressing elevator buttons safer.

One last volunteer opportunity I take advantage of is for special Olympics softball. A few of my friends and I had been umpiring our local softball games for a few years, and we had heard about a volunteer opening to umpire Special Olympics softball. This experience was tons of fun, and it was great seeing everybody play a game they love. I loved helping out, and I have continued to volunteer for 3 years. Sadly, it was canceled last year due to the pandemic, but I plan to continue volunteering once the tournament is brought back safely.

I am very thankful to have been given the chance to help my community over the past four years, and I hope to continue to live the DCU motto to prioritize people, do the right thing, and make a difference.

30: Essay: "How has FIRST helped you grow during your time in high school." 1 winner; $2000

Ideas: Introduced me to Computer Science and programming, problem solving skills, leadership, teamwork,

When I entered High School, I had no clue what I wanted to do when I graduated. I figured I might want to do something engineering-related, as I had been interested in science from a young age. I had been enrolled in the FIRST Lego League competition since 5th grade, so I decided to join the high school robotics team. This was one of my best high school decisions. I remember information night, going around and seeing what each subteam did. I ended up trying my hand at software, because I had never been a mechanically-inclined person, and I didn’t feel like I belonged in animation or marketing. That first year was the first time I tried programming, and I fell in love with the idea of code being able to control a physical object like a robot. However, I was a Freshman, and easily distractable, so I didn’t learn too much. Sophomore year, I was just as dedicated and much more focused, so I learned even more about how we developed code from start to finish. I learned how to work together with the rest of the software subteam to make much more organized and functional code. This was the year that I decided that I wanted to continue coding after High School. Junior year, I continued to learn and began to take more control of my learning by enrolling myself in a VLACS coding course. Here, I learned my second programming language: python. Learning python allowed me to see how all programming languages are similar. This new knowledge allowed me to even better understand how our code controlled the robot. Sadly, our season was cut short after we won our first competition. However, the team now knew what it took to build (and program) a winning robot. Senior year, I decided to try out for Software lead, feeling that my knowledge gained over the past four years was enough to head the software subteam. I was elected Software lead this year, and it has allowed me to grow my leadership skills greatly. I used to be afraid of leading a group, but now I feel confident scheduling, assigning jobs, and checking up on subteam members, as well as coordinating with other subteams to make a functioning robot. Throughout my high school career, Chop Shop has helped me develop problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership skills, as well as has introduced me to Computer Science, which I will be majoring in next year.

List of Contributions: Worked on Lift and Drive code in the 2018 Season, Headed development of Drive code during 2019 Season, Headed development of Lift code during 2020 Season, Added more Input and output compatibility to our code library, software lead during 2021 season, worked on autonomous path following for 2021 season

44: Graduating MHS Senior. Must submit essay on the Bill of Rights, hopefully with emphasis on the Second Amendment, but not exclusively so. (Winner will need to give permission to allow the association to publish essay in their monthly newsletter.) 1 winner; $500

The year after the Constitution was ratified, the US Congress met again in New York to draft the Bill of Rights, the first ten Amendments to the Constitution. These amendments were made to further restrict the influence of the government and to give more rights to the people. Twelve amendments were proposed, and out of them ten amendments were passed. These proposed amendments were ordered by what article of the Constitution they modify.

The first two amendments, which were rejected, would have modified Article I (regarding the Legislative Branch). The first of the ten ratified amendments restricts Congress. It protects the people’s right to religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition by disallowing Congress to pass a law limiting these rights. If this amendment were not passed, Congress would be able to take control of the states by repressing the people’s ideas. A political takeover by Congress would greatly threaten the people’s freedoms.

The Second, Third, and Fourth Amendments focus on Article II of the Constitution and limit the executive branch. The Second Amendment holds much weight and is a topic of many political arguments today. It protects the people’s rights to assemble as a militia and to own arms. This is very important, as it protects the people’s rights to defend themselves, be it against criminals or against those trying to repress their rights by force. It also allows people to make a living by hunting game. The Third and Fourth Amendments protect the people’s rights to their property by restricting the executive branch from the quartering of soldiers and unreasonable searches and seizures. Without these three amendments, the executive branch would be given near-total control over the people. This could make way for martial law, with the government stripping all power from citizens and holding them defenseless.

The next four amendments restrict the judicial branch and modifies Article III. Protections under these amendments defend the prosecuted from improper process, self-incrimination, double jeopardy, denial of a speedy and public trial, and from excessive bail, among others. It also gives the accused the right to a trial by jury. Without these amendments, the judicial branch would be able to accuse anyone and hold private, unfair trials, even those in office, which could result in a political takeover.

The final two amendments revise Article IV and expand the rights of people and individual states. Article 9 declares that the Constitution must not be used to strip power from the people or give additional power to the government unless this power is specifically mentioned. This essentially future-proofed the Constitution. The final Amendment in the Bill of Rights declares that any power not specifically delegated to the Federal Government must be handed over to the states or the people. These amendments are important to allow the people and states to check the power of the Federal Government.

Overall, the Bill of Rights is used to redistribute power from the government to the people. This allows for a country with power balanced between the three branches of the Federal Government, the states, and the people. Though some of its powers have been restricted by more recent amendments, the Bill of Rights laid a foundation of anti-federalism that is still upheld today.