Before leaving for the Wayne Barton Center, I ate a delicious breakfast of scrambled eggs and golden pancakes. As I walked in, I passed a long line of families waiting for a free meal, a stark contrast to my big breakfast. Once inside, I start organizing hundreds of shoes by size and style. When the doors open, kids line up outside the room, giggling in excitement, curiously peering at the shoes. I’m wearing new white Nikes; they have old flip-flops or sneakers with holes. They enter the room to browse and pick their sneakers. Tapping my arm, they enthusiastically share their sneaker choices with me and run out to brag to their waiting friends about their new shoes. This joy is exactly why I started Compete 2 Give.

As a sixth grade volunteer at the Boys and Girls club, I learned that poverty does not only exist in far-away places but also in my own backyard. At the same time, my exposure to football, basketball and tennis taught me persistence and teamwork. In middle school, I had an interesting idea to help the local community through sports, and Compete 2 Give was born. After three successful tennis fund-raising events, where players competed and raised support for causes like cancer and autism, I realized that there were endless ways that sports could be the tool to improve and brighten people’s lives.

Accordingly, I started a Compete 2 Give club at my high school. For its major event, I wanted to use a team sport, and raise support for a cause important to me. I chose the Wayne Barton Study Center, where my travel basketball team used to practice, and I first encountered Wayne and the kids. To play in our basketball tournament, you had to donate athletic attire or equipment. After months of coordination, over 100 students participated, donating a busload of donations. Seeing the kids’ animated reactions, I was motivated to provide them with brand new sneakers instead of used ones. To do this, I needed help.

To expand, my twin brother and I networked with other schools to find new club leaders. As we gained traction, kids, teachers, and parents reached out to start clubs at their schools, organizations contacted us for volunteers, and companies offered sponsorships. With our growing network, we supported the annual *Back to School Jam* at the Wayne Barton Center and gave away brand new sneakers and school supplies. Over time, we grew from one club to seven clubs, and over twenty club leaders. With a broader collective reach, we’ve coordinated a variety of weekly programs like basketball clinics and art classes at the Florence Fuller Center, and we’ve barely scratched the surface of what’s possible. My next step is to take Compete 2 Give to college campuses. Running Compete 2 Give is like running a startup, so enhancing my study of business, and business knowledge can help Compete 2 Give.

Compete 2 Give showed me that there was work to be done in other areas of my life. I realized that though I’m a good student, I can improve my work ethic and set higher goals. On the varsity tennis team, I can improve my game and move up the ladder. Instead of complaining about our school’s problems, I took the initiative to solve them by running for senior class representative. Overall, whether it be Compete 2 Give, academics, athletics, student council, or business, I can always find room for improvement.

There is always more work to be done. There is always one more hardworking student who walks to school in beat-up shoes and needs new sneakers, one more family that needs a turkey to make Thanksgiving whole. No matter how hard I work, or how much effort I put into anything I do, I can always work harder. There is always one more part of myself I can improve. My work is never complete.