

**Richard Blackwell Volunteer Scholarships**

**2024**

**Student Statements**

I have truly enjoyed volunteering at the Woodbridge Town Library over the past two years. I have appreciated the opportunity to connect with the community and help make our library run smoother. It has been great getting to know the wonderful people who work here and the families that we service. The library has been a warm, safe, and welcoming environment, and I will miss everyone greatly.

I look forward to visiting when I return home for college vacations.

*Daniel Aferzon*

As a Friends volunteer, I saw many interesting books come through and had a great time interacting with all the great people here. I'll most remember the interesting conversations we've been able to have as we went on with our work. To anyone thinking about volunteering with Friends of The Woodbridge Library, I'd say go for it. You get more than just volunteer hours, including some good times.

*Aurelien Buisine*

The Woodbridge Town Library has been a large presence in my life at Woodbridge. I loved visiting as a kid and would often leave with more books than I could carry. As a high schooler, I often frequent the library to do homework or hang out with friends. The library has helped me immensely over the years, and it was because of this I first started volunteering with the Friends of the Woodbridge Town Library. I would help clean and sort donated books for the bookstore, in addition to helping sell them to kids at a few events for fundraising. I hope that by doing so, I've done my part in helping the library remain intact for years to come so it can do for others what it did for me. My time as a Friends volunteer taught me about the importance of giving back to your community, and I'd highly recommend it to anyone looking to help out.

*Evelyn Chen*

Throughout my experience volunteering at the Friends of the Woodbridge Library, I was able to get a better sense of the Woodbridge community. Walking in every day to see more and more books that have been donated surprised me at first, as I did not realize there were that many people actively involved. However, I quickly realized the impact this organization has on the town both with its generosity and its purpose. The Friends of the Woodbridge Library has helped me learn more about the small town of Woodbridge and the people that live here.

*Max Corvino*

Volunteering at my local library has been an incredibly enriching journey for me. Each moment spent within there has been a lesson in the power of community, knowledge, and service. Whether it's helping clean books, helping people during book sale events, or helping decorate the library for different events every interaction has left a lasting impact on me. These opportunities helped me foster a love for literature and learning. Through my volunteer work, I've found fulfillment in connecting with others over shared passions and in creating a space where literature thrives. I would recommend volunteering at the Woodbridge Town Library to high school students since it can help you learn and help out others in your community. After volunteering at the library I had a different perspective of the library, I was able to see the importance the local librarians have on the community. The library has become more than just a building; it's a sanctuary where I've discovered the joy of giving back, the profound impact of small acts of kindness, and helping out my community.

I am deeply saddened to hear about the passing of Mr. Blackwell. While his absence will be felt, I am honored to participate in an event that celebrates his vision and the contributions of student volunteers like myself.

*Jennifer Gu*

Growing up, I loved reading books and always went to the Woodbridge town library. I found volunteering here would be a great opportunity for me to give back to my community. If you are interested in volunteering here I would highly recommend it. Also, you can bring some friends along and have fun together while helping the library.

*Subhawn Hussain*

During my years volunteering at the Woodbridge, I have learned that even the smallest contributions to the community that continues to borrow books to this day makes me feel nothing but happier because I am doing something that is worth doing. I will always remember when I was able to peacefully be at the library and clean books in a serene atmosphere. Also, volunteering at the library gave me an opportunity to work, and it was substantial. I would tell someone that if you like being in a place where you can work quietly and earn community service hours, volunteering at the library is a great start to work.

*Jonathan Jeong*

For the time I had at the Woodbridge Friends library I just want to say thank you for the warm and inviting atmosphere I volunteered in. In the two and a half years I have volunteered here I was always welcomed by the amazing staff that wanted to make sure we were taken care of. I am honored to have volunteered for such a great place and to have worked with my friends. I will always be grateful for the time I spent here, and I want to thank the Friend Library for an amazing volunteer experience.

*Joshua Kang*

From volunteering at the Woodbridge Friends, what I will remember most is the community that felt warm and welcoming. The overwhelming positivity shown to me and my friends when we went in to try and help out our community is still shown even as we reach the later end of our senior year during a much harder and overwhelming time. It truly feels like it has become my second home! I would tell anyone who thought about volunteering to go through with it. It is a fulfilling activity that keeps you busy and makes you feel happy to contribute to the community, as well as the overwhelming support and the delicious snacks!

*Eyad Kamel*

I am an Amity Regional High School senior and have volunteered at The Friends of Woodbridge Library for the past two years. I have learned the value of making connections and getting involved in my community while volunteering in this program. People do not realize that when you volunteer at The Friends of Woodbridge Library, how many important individuals you meet will help you with your future. Through meeting Donna and Cathy, I have encountered countless others who know of their prestigious work at The Friends of Woodbridge Library. You will make meaningful relationships with the adult and student volunteers inside and outside the library walls.

Volunteering at The Friends of Woodbridge Library helps you find opportunities for success in other aspects of your life, including a sense of community that has helped me network with individuals for future opportunities. Donna and Cathy have truly fostered a welcoming place for students to dedicate their time. I was not an avid reader when I arrived at The Friends of Woodbridge Library, and Donna and Cathy's vision helped me appreciate the importance of books for others. Every book that comes through The Friends of Woodbridge Library is given a chance for a new life, and no book is left behind. The books are often donated to shelters, prisons, and Goodwill as a last resort. If books are unsuitable for donation, they are recycled into new books.

Volunteering is truly a selfless act that every high schooler should experience to establish more kindness in our community. Donna and Cathy make everyone feel welcome to volunteer and participate. The message I would give future high school generations is to get out there, meet your community, take the risk, and make connections. The Friends of the Woodbridge Library is the best place to do so.

*Luna Lipnickas*

During my time volunteering at the Friends of the Woodbridge Town Library for 2 years, I've gained valuable experience in community work and communication skills. I also found myself becoming more of an organized individual with the skills of being at a bookstore. This bookstore was a great place for me to connect with the rest of the community, from other volunteers there that I never met before or people from school to people in town who came during book sales.

One aspect that stands out to me is the importance of recycling within the community. The concept of returning used books to the community and purchasing used books at affordable prices not only promotes unity but also sustainability. However, it is crucial to ensure the quality of these books by cleaning and organizing them meticulously. Seeing those leave the library with a book in hand and a smile on their faces, even without having a library, is truly rewarding.

I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to an overseen but meaningful cause and would be honored to be considered for the scholarship. I will also return to the library for my internship and dive deeper into learning how to extend our sales on Amazon to other places rather than just Woodbridge and other neighboring towns.

*Julia Nguyen*

Thank you for selecting me as one of the scholarship recipients on behalf of Friends of the Woodbridge Library! I am honored to have been selected and am excited to attend the reception on May 9th at 4:00 pm with my older sister in attendance. I've had a wonderful experience volunteering at Friends of the Woodbridge Library over the past couple of years. Through the hours I've spent organizing new book donations and book displays to assisting patrons and kids with new book recommendations from the Bookstore Alley, I've learned to appreciate the spirit of volunteerism and the value of giving back to my local community. I hope to inspire future students to consider volunteering and supporting their libraries as the plentiful resources and services libraries provide are invaluable to the public. Additionally, everyone at the library is friendly and welcoming. Both you and Mrs. Austin are some of the kindest people I've ever met. My time volunteering has been truly a rewarding experience!

*Eric Zhang*