

*My growth has been shaped by Pass It Along – Krista Shugart, Sparta High School*

It has been three years since I have been an active teen volunteer of Pass It Along. It is hard to put into words how much this experience has shaped my growth. I can still remember my first event, it was having a barbecue and swimming with inner city kids at Lake Hopatcong with a group called “Tilly’s Kids.” It was such a great experience to be surrounded by such happy people.

Since then, Pass It Along has welcomed me, as they welcome everyone, and given me countless opportunities. Another favorite of mine is cooking with the mission. Monthly, a group of volunteers go to Newark to cook. We prepare food for 150 people, and package food into brown paper bags for the recipients to take home. If you get done cooking early, you can attend the church service upstairs. Once you sit down you are presented with smiles from the kids who attend Tilly’s Kids as they welcome you with a hug. It is so moving to talk to the people who come to the mission. They are so grateful for the food you prepare them, but to me, it seems like such a simple offering.

Pass It Along has provided me with numerous leadership opportunities. I have been in Big Brothers Big Sisters for two years, and it is so rewarding. This year I had a little who was in kindergarten. While our friendship grew over the year, he made me want to be the best role model I could be. After participating for the past two years, I have a stronger understanding of young children, and how to mentor them.

Volunteering is helping. Pass It Along has made me realize that there are countless volunteer opportunities in everyday life. Service has become the most important thing in my life. It consumes my thoughts for today and the future. Pass It Along has left a life-long impact on my life. I’m so glad that I have become a part of this non-profit organization at such a young age, because now I know what I want to do for the rest of my life. I try to take nothing for granted, because I realize how fortunate I am. By giving my time to Pass It Along, I have received so much more.