

Meaningful Volunteering and What It Means To Me
by Zane Kunimura

They say that an old dog can't learn new tricks. One couldn't be more wrong. Change is the only constant, a factor we ourselves cannot influence. Whether positive or negative, it is ultimately up to us what choices we choose to make. May I begin by introducing myself? I'm Zane Kunimura from Waiakea High School; on the Big Island of Hawaii. I'm sixteen, not yet an old dog, a junior; and I haven't heeded good advice, instead hoping to learn from my mistakes. Recently I haven't made the right choices, at times involving legal action. As a result, I ended up in a different school situation, involving varying schedules, and a new development, the work study program. In locating a volunteer job, I found one at The Pet Hospital, Hilo. Previously, I'd difficulties with trust, but this was a fresh start and a clean slate for me. I've gained trust, and am able to operate very costly machinery, work with potentially harmful substances, and more. I've learned empathy and valuable social skills in dealing with clients, coworkers, and their pets. Through every step, from addressing questions and concerns, to learning a creature's antics, and the nerve-racking end of life decisions, like euthanasia. There are countless emotions, from the joy of bringing new life into the world, to the grief of the needle that ends both pain and suffering, and the loss of a companion, friend, and family member. As a result, I'm able to interact and communicate much more effectively, and can be more involved in conversation. I've learned time management, and in certain situations, time can be a difference of life and death. As a volunteer, I started off doing the little things that play a big role, such as sanitation. I undertook these tasks and did my best, and soon my curiosity and will to learn led me to be given the opportunity to do lab work and other bigger roles, which I accomplished with the same zest. I now do whatever, wherever my help is needed. All along I have gained much knowledge and insight, which may be with me in my future medical career. It's very important to me for obvious reasons, and it's a way I can give back to the community, correct my wrongdoings, and do

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something great. For both pets and their owners, it has resounding effects. Collectively, we prolong and increase the quality of life for pets, and in turn, their families. I cannot thank Dr. Alan, Janie, the coworkers, clients, and my parents enough. As a whole, volunteering has allowed me to evolve into a better person, and help others while doing so. It keeps me out of trouble, and is a meaningful and worthwhile way to spend my time. No one's perfect. We all make mistakes. The choice whether or not to learn from them makes all the difference. This is what meaningful volunteering means to me: an opportunity to change for the better, and gain acceptance in the community.