

When I bike to school, some days I hit every red light. On other days, I barely brake at all. Many days fall somewhere in between. The most special type of day, however, is when someone encounters a red light - a disruption that holds the power to wreck their day - and I am the one to turn it green - by supporting them to ensure things go smoothly for them.

One day, I saw a freshman whose bike chain had fallen off, a problem he had never encountered. Knowing he would be late to school if I didn't help him, I stopped to help. In minutes, I made his red light green - and neither of us was late. While I didn't know it at the time, this was an example of what I have come to think of as the circle of kindness.

Last year, I volunteered for 5 days at Walden West, a science and nature camp for elementary school students. I have strong positive memories of attending Walden West and wanted to volunteer to ensure the students attending this year can also look back fondly. My responsibility was to ensure 16 students felt safe, secure and knew they had someone to turn to. I kept them safe in the cabin, made sure we were on time for activities, helped them stay focused during outdoor activities, and that they were ready for bed on time. It was difficult, but also rewarding because I knew I was providing the students exactly what they needed- a place where they could mature, and be comfortable in themselves. Surprisingly, I also grew greatly. Being out of my element and never having had such an important responsibility before taught me to think on my feet and adapt quickly.

Acclimating to the rise of digital technology is a key facet of growing up in Silicon Valley. While more technologically fluent than many, I appreciate the struggle to keep up. Growing up in a world where technology is so prevalent has allowed me to understand and utilize it to my advantage. Technology helped me pursue an internship with Climate Resilient Communities (CRC). I visited people in my community affected by climate change and saw the large potential impact of governmental programs, but was disappointed to learn that the information to apply for these programs is not available to those who need it most. To help combat this, I updated CRC's website by providing timely and accurate information and making it easier to find said information. Many underrepresented communities in my area are affected by climate change. Creating social media content that informed residents of various resources and programs they could use felt both rewarding to create, and challenging to find information to spread. Seeing CRC's clients' houses renovated by various philanthropic programs was really satisfying when I saw the true impact that I could make on even one person's life. I hope that the people who CRC assisted have helped carry on that cycle of kindness to support even more people.

A few days after the bike chain incident, I overheard one of my friends talking about how their brother was happy because someone fixed their bike chain. Hearing that made me happy for the rest of my day! The cycle of goodwill from simple actions is what motivates me to seek out ways to help people and spread kindness throughout my school.

Some Walden West kids from my cabin have since told me they also want to be cabin leaders, another example of the enormous impact of the cycle of kindness. All of these examples are what propels me to take the next step into college to find more ways to support my community in impactful ways. And who knows? Maybe one day the cycle of kindness will come back to me when I need it most.