When I was a kid, I begged for my parents to take music lessons. Going home every day after school with nothing to do always inspired a great deal of aspiration. I wanted to play piano, the flute, and violin. Unfortunately I wasn’t able to take music lessons because of the facilities being too far away. Having a meal ready to devour after a long day of phonics and shapes was another parental request of mine. Both my parents worked around the clock, so as far as having an afterschool meal prepared everyday after school; it wasn’t going to happen. The cereal bars and candy left on the top of the refrigerator was normally the first thing I would climb on the step stool to reach for.

Homework for an elementary school kid was a nightmare. I couldn’t stay focused long enough to finish a math problem because I knew Author would be on any minute. When the PBS Kids show would draw to a close, that’s when I started my homework. I normally sat at the kitchen table to do it. I had a brother and sister who weren’t really the most patient helpers when it came to homework tutoring. They were busy trying to get back to their chemistry homework. They didn’t have time to help me with Level 3 spelling words or times tables.

Hi, my name is Loryn Smith. I’ve been a volunteer at Rainey for four years. Everything that I described in that anecdote is something that Rainey Institute caters to Monday-Friday, 3:30-6pm. Kids are catered to, both academically and artistically.

When I walk in, I see Rainey staff ready to help any child with some homework questions he or she may have. Most are eating their recently prepared meal, if not getting help with their homework. I’d normally join the table with the most kids. The picture behind me shows Kyland, the boy in the back with the great big smile. I met him on my first day and have been a big fan ever since. He always forgets my name, but never forgets my face. He’ll look at me, scream hi, and tell me he can’t remember my name. Kyland is just one of the many hard to forget faces that I’ve met on my Rainey journey. I’ve compiled a picture booklet describing my experience and more information about what I’ve taken away from this amazing experience. Unfortunately, there was a glitch in the ordering process and my book did not arrive in time for this reception.

In closing, I’d like to read an excerpt from my booklet entitled: When the Young Minds Shine:

“I really had no idea why I chose Rainey or why I devoted a couple hours every week to these kids. As time progressed and I grew older, I can finally say I have an answer to his question. I chose Rainey because I wanted to test myself. I wanted to prove to myself that my time and presence could have a positive effect on somebody. I chose kids because I knew how I was as a child. I wanted someone to help me with my homework while being able to ask him or her questions beyond the homework. Someone to give me advice and to genuinely care about me without them feeling entitled to. Rainey was more than a service placement, but an opportunity for me to delve deeper into myself and give what I could to children who looked up to me, who showed me that there was something out there bigger than me, just as small as they are.”

Thank You