

Essay by Elizabeth Ratajczyk

The Whitefish Bay Library has been part of my academic and learning journey throughout my entire life, starting in pre-school, to elementary, middle, and now during high school. My adventures to the library taught me the value of literacy, research, and knowledge.

My first memory of the Whitefish Bay Library was when my mother would take my sister and me to storytime. Later, we would check out movies and books. Fridays were filled with anticipation and excitement for the new releases in the DVD section.

My love of reading peaked in elementary school as I regularly went to the library to check out chapter books, especially the Ivy and Bean series. My new interest was to the disapproval of my mother, who would catch me under the covers, past bedtime, with a newly checked-out book and my reading light.

Preparing for the National Geographic Bee, I scoured over the many atlases and maps in the children's and adult sections. Fifth Grade was definitely a highlight for me, after winning the Geo Bee, I am proud to say my Battle of the Books team, The Spunky Funky Monkeys, won the Battle, after spending endless hours in the library!

In middle school, before vacation, my family and I would select books and DVDs for the places we were going to visit. The Rick Steve and National Geographic documentaries were all checked out before our trip. Learning about the Kings and Queens of France was thrilling. Delving into the customs and cultures of the various countries we were traveling to sparked my interest in global studies, which I plan to study in college.

With streaming devices and added responsibilities, I do not find myself checking out DVDs anymore; however, the library is still a treasured place to spend my time. Studying with my friends in a study room or quietly in the many other spots, has saved me from distractions at my house. In the Friends of the Library used book room and displays, I have graciously utilized the \$1 books for English classes, diverse international authors for my Global Scholars Program requirements, and also ACT prep books. This resource has been invaluable.

While the books and DVDs may transport me to faraway places, and my college journey may as well, I am comforted in knowing I have the Whitefish Bay Library just blocks away from my own backyard.