

What's My Tracking Location?

By: Anar Panjwani

As the scheduled shipment date drew nearer, my legs went inside first. Soon enough, my body, neck down, tightened as it was cramped in next. My parents stuffed packaging tissue in the remaining space until suddenly the flaps of the box shut over my head. They then duct taped the corners and stamped me to an address in Mechanicsville, Virginia. Trapped inside a brown cardboard FedEx box, I finally distinguished the dreadful truth: I was moving.

Before the delivery, I settled in New Jersey for ten amazing years, surrounded by the same circle of friends I built sand castles and played freeze tag with in kindergarten. Always with a monumental smile on my face, I went out of my way to please others, especially my friends. As an individual among my freshman class, I quickly made my presence aware and left a mark on the grounds of my school. Many would say, socially, my life was close to perfection.

However, I was soon to take an unexpected detour from the familiar, densely-populated city life of New Jersey to the vast suburbs and southern farmlands of Virginia. It was peculiar to be in a foreign land where street lights didn't exist and houses were not in propinquity to one another; rather, all I witnessed through the holes of my box was a green blanket of land. Tears welled up in my eyes and soaked the tissue that encircled me. As an erratic teenager, I was a prisoner of confinement, locked away and disregarded of decision.

I stepped into my new school, this time, uncertain of whether I could leave any mark. When eyes glared in my direction, I knew what it felt like to be introverted. In fear of rejection, beads of sweat crawled down my face, my heart ached every time it pounded, and my knees trembled until I could no longer walk. When approached, I opened my mouth to speak, but nothing came out. In silence, I stood motionless, overtaken by embarrassment. Suddenly, an unwanted feeling of claustrophobia pummeled me, which made me realize that I was still trapped in that same shipping box I had arrived in. I wished my parents would return me to where I belonged: Edison, New Jersey.

Struggling through weeks of gloominess and misery, it dawned on me: I had to take matters into my own hands. Finding comfort in a renowned romantic novel by Nora Roberts, a phrase stood out, "If you don't go after what you want, you'll never have it. If you don't step forward, you're always in the same place." There was a certain numbness that overcame me when I read these words. I was feeble for feeling sorry for myself—if I wanted anything to change I had to accept this new destination.

With an innovative perspective, I took an alternate drive home from my ordinary route and landed at a volunteer orientation at a nearby senior citizen's home, Covenant Woods. As I began my sophomore year, I kept myself busy every day after school volunteering with the residents. One day, I was startled to observe an old woman transitioning into Covenant Woods. Similar to the way she had to depart her previous home and move to an assisted living facility, I had to move from New Jersey to Virginia. The nerves that consumed her were the same ones that once consumed me. Her feeling of nostalgia was the same one I had felt. In the end, we immediately reconciled in our similarities about how difficult it is to transition into a new environment.

After my conversation with the woman in the nursing home, I encountered a profound love for involvement in my community. Reaching out to one person and fathoming the minute acts of compassion I could pursue ignited inspiration to further volunteer at the local hospital and library.

After meeting one of my best friends, Madison, I saw the doors that Virginia was opening for me. Madison encouraged me to open up, join clubs, and meet new people. One club I joined was SODA (Student Organization for Developing Attitudes). In SODA, I walk into a fourth grade classroom packed with tiny eager faces, smiles with missing teeth, and large beaming eyes but most importantly, I spot a willingness to learn. Teaching children and discussing crucial topics like self-esteem, healthy relationships, and essential habits has taught me that I can make an impact on the world too. I know now that I want to continue volunteering and staying active even when I go to college. In fact, recently, though I have a passionate interest in medicine, I want to set up organizations at my university where I intend to change the lives of children and providing them an opportunity to succeed in the future. After all, I strongly believe in the saying that "children are our future". Also, in my senior year I was honored

with the position of Captain for SODA. Not much later was I in the midst of understanding my true potential.

Soon enough I realized that my parents did not make an error in the address label to Mechanicsville, Virginia after all. Eventually my life gradually fell into place; I mustered up the courage to embrace the hub of student life, the plethora of opportunity, and the possibility to lift my social and humanitarian ventures in both my community and my school.

I have just begun to realize who I am: I am a sum of my experiences, the most harrowing being my sudden move. Though, it was a bittersweet obstacle I had to overcome in order to discover my passion for involvement. Now, I am the same social teenager I had been but I advocate the significance of contributing to my community and my school because it has taught me a valuable lesson. I will always need to make transitions in my life. But what is imperative is keeping the right attitude and making the most out of even the worst situation.

To any student who is moving or has moved, the advice I have to offer is to take advantage of your surroundings. Don't be afraid to be yourself and to find what your passions are. Sure it's always difficult to accustom to a new place but give it a chance and I guarantee you'll be surprised at what you, yourself and what other people have to offer.

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