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## MY LESSONS FROM COSA

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Hello. My name is Cole Dionne, I am a third year commerce student from Kindersley, Saskatchewan.

To give you the short version of what I'm about to say, CoSA (Circle of Support and Accountability) has been a great experience and I am grateful for the lessons it has taught me.



To give you the scope of my volunteer experience, I will start with when I moved to the city. During my high school years, I had volunteered on and off for several years but I knew that I wanted to try volunteering during my time in Saskatoon. However, I ran into a large obstacle in my first year of school, known as calculus. This very demanding course ate up tons of my time and I spent most of my time studying and didn't get around to inquiring into volunteer opportunities.

After moving back to the city to begin my second year is when the CoSA opportunity started for me. When I was picking classes I needed an elective that needed to not focus on commerce subjects. So as I was choosing courses I noticed one called Religious Studies 284. When I searched the past reviews of students who had taken the class, one review stuck out to me, it read "Take this course it will change your life."

One of the required items in the class was a choice between writing a book report on a topic pertaining to religion and nonviolence, or to volunteer for the semester and write a paper that shows my evidence of learning from my experience. One of the choices was CoSA.

At first I was apprehensive of meeting three individuals I knew nothing about, at a place I had never been. For the first meeting I arrived quite early (15-30 minutes before we were scheduled to start). As the meeting progressed and I met the other two volunteers and our core member I settled in and realized that this line of volunteering was something I wanted to continue.

Now looking back almost a year later I am glad that I saw it through. Over the course of my term (end of October – end of April) I was able to see the growth our circle made in terms of friendship, trust, and sharing. The commitment of meeting each week was incorporated into my weekly routine, and I have been very fortunate to have been recently re-engaged with my circle, after returning from a summer back in my home town of Kindersley.

On a personal level this group has taught me skills that I believe would be difficult to learn in other capacities. The skill that has stood out for me has been the ability to realize that an 'action' by no

means defines a person. In just 12 short months I have been able to see the tremendous growth of an individual who I would have likely never met if not for CoSA.

An additional personal skill that I have felt grow because of this experience, has been my confidence and my ability to let myself open up to people whom I haven't known for much of my life, but to do so knowing they won't harbor judgment against me, and likewise me for them.

If I had to pick one highlight from my experience it would be the personal relationships that I have formed as a direct result of my circle. Through this process I have been very blessed to have been involved in a very trusting and open circle.

In the short time that I have volunteered with CoSA it has had a tremendous impact on my life, and I look forward to the future that this volunteering experience holds.

Thank you for taking time to read about my personal experience with CoSA.