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Prompt 3

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### Growing Up in the Backstretch Community

Over the past years, the backstretch community has proven to show that even after the hardships, we stick together. To begin, the backstretch community is unique from other communities since we grow up in the same environment and eventually make long lasting friendships with the rest of the children. The connection that is formed between the youth goes a long way when it comes to preparing for college, forming study groups, or even going out and making memories.

Although the backstretch community is a tight community, we have faced challenges from growing up in the backstretch which include being looked down upon. Coming from experience, individuals think less of the community because of the environment that our parents work in. They see the community and backstretch as filthy and think the workers are incapable of making a proper living off their job with the horses.

Another challenge we have faced while growing up in the backstretch include waking up early every day to take the bus from Arlington Heights all the way back to Cicero. Since kindergarten all the way through high school, children wake up early to form a line and proceed on to a forty-five-minute ride. Not only are the mornings harsh because of the traffic, but afternoons as well because of the heat. In certain occasions, children had to be seated in the bus next to two other children making it uncomfortable to even move. We would eventually get home at around five in the afternoon which gave us around five hours to continue our day before the same routine had to be repeated for the next school day. Thus, the bus rides went by fast

when we took naps yet, they were the hardest challenge while growing up in the backstretch.

Aside from the challenges, growing up in the backstretch had many benefits such as camps in the summer that helped us grow intellectually. When summer started, most of the children from the backstretch workers attended camp which divided us into age groups and gave us a routine every day. We would go to pools, to the community library and play bingo, or just spend time in the backstretch playing games and learning. Summer camp emphasized that the backstretch community gave us resources that helped the children distract themselves while still learning. Another benefit that ties down to the resources that were provided to us as children include the mobile library that came to the backstretch every Friday. The mobile bus library rented the children books, movies, and puzzles for a week. These resources played an important role to us while growing up since it provided the knowledge that our parents weren't giving us due to being from a low-income community.

Adding on, growing up in the backstretch has its benefits when it comes to the holiday celebrations. During Thanksgiving Week, Hawthorne usually hosts an event where employees are welcomed to bring their families for dinner. Also, during Christmas, they host another event where dinner is served, and Santa gives toys to the children of the backstretch workers. I remember being smaller and looking forward to those events. I now realize those events were privileges we received from our parents working in the racetrack.

To conclude, the backstretch community has given me resources, memories, and challenges that have made me the person I am today. Due to my childhood, I now acknowledge that everyone grows up with different privileges, yet I don't regret growing up in the backstretch because it has given me many opportunities. In this case, it has given me the opportunity to apply for a scholarship that will cover my nursing tuition for the upcoming year.