I've been volunteering at the local public libraries since seventh grade, but I've used the libraries in St. Tammany Parish for as long as I can remember. One of my first memories after moving to Mandeville is of going to the trailhead for snowballs, playing at the splash pad, then walking to get my first library card. Since then, I've spent every summer doing summer reading and taking advantage of the workshops available to me, including, but not limited to, choreography, environmental awareness, button-making, sign language, water sublimation, and archaeology. In recent years, I've volunteered to sign other people up for summer reading. When no one is around to register, I get to do one of my favorite things: shelve books.

When I'm at the school library, people will sometimes ask me for help finding a book. I'm there all the time, so I have no problem helping them find what they're looking for. When my teachers assign a big research project, we typically spend a few days in the library gathering resources. I'm almost always the first one done. I may not have the Dewey Decimal system memorized, but it's easy for me to get a basic idea of where I can get what I need. Volunteering at the library has also made me good at asking questions, a skill I consider invaluable. If I can't find something, I'm not afraid to ask.

Many people do not realize the extent of resources available at the public library. Getting a library card unlocks access to language courses, study tips, advice for applying to jobs, and my personal favorite, test prep. I have a 34 composite on the ACT. My school has an ACT 30+ wall, so people can see this and sometimes stop to ask me for help. My suggestion is always the same: go to the library website. I used the Princeton Review test materials and my math score went up eight points. The best part is that it was free. Rather than spending upwards of $30 on a workbook, I just used my library card to get access to videos and practice problems online.

Next year, I will major in computer science at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette so I can one day be an Artificial Intelligence ethicist or researcher. Almost all my freshman classes are computer science classes rather than core classes like English, history, or natural sciences, so I'll need all the help I can get. I'm going to spend as much time as possible researching artificial intelligence so I can have a good idea of what I'm working towards. I'll need as many extra online courses, study tips, and textbooks as I can to help me through what I'm sure will be an intense year, but I know I can find what I need in the library.

Susannah Donoghue