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3rd Place (tie)
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I still remember the day when chatter filled every corner of the bus as thickets of lush, tall trees gradually appeared along the sides of the road, enveloping us in the presence of the vast forest leading us to the renowned Walden West, a place that gave me a fresh, hopeful perspective on our beautiful planet and how I could make a difference.

The first nights of my stay, I faced many things that challenged and redefined my idea of comfort, serenity, and contentment. Being there also taught me that making a difference doesn't mean making big sacrifices. Change is the result of making *thoughtful* decisions. For example, when showering time came around, I didn't need an extra ten minutes to be just as clean. While eating, I didn't need that extra serving to be full, and when it was time to sleep, a soft pillow and a blanket was all I needed to rest well.

The *humbling* experience I had in nature changed me in many ways. Pushing away the distractions of everyday life allowed me to see how petty I was compared to astounding life and harmony there was within the "complex" simplicity of nature. Sitting there, immersed in the music of nature brought me so much happiness on its own. Through this, I gained new respect for this beautiful place.

Allowing myself to understand, appreciate, and protect our planet gave me more *comfort* than being engulfed in the comforts of my home. Spending quality time with friends offline gave me *contentment*. There are many distractions that come with everyday life, blocking us from seeing beyond the illusion of what contentment is. Being at Walden West helped me find a new hope through *nature* within *myself* and how I could play a role in saving our beautiful planet.