

2020 St. Vincent's Youth Award Winner

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Being able to help my community in various ways has definitely pushed me to become the young woman I am today. I enjoy giving back to my community and opening up resources that I didn't have to others; essentially benefiting the generations to come. I have been involved in multiple community service projects at both my high school and for outside community services. My main three community service attributes are: Amigos Club at Mamaroneck Avenue School, Literacy Ambassadors at Mamaroneck High School, and Washingtonville Alliance Tutoring. These three community service attributes are my most time commitment based services. I work extremely hard balancing my school work and community service all together; the impact I hope to make is what motivates me to put in the effort of making time for these activities all year round.

For the Amigos club, I have dedicated 2 hours of service every week from the end of February to the end of May, for three years. This year, I was elected President of the club, and I had definitely put in a lot of time and effort to make sure that the club ran smoothly before we officially started in late February. The Amigos Club is held at our local elementary school, Mamaroneck Avenue School, where 25 selected high school students help mentor and tutor elementary students. Students from both schools are selected to be in this club. I held interviews for various students during lunch (1 hour) and after school (1 hour and a half) at Mamaroneck High School for two weeks. Students from Mamaroneck Avenue School are selected based on their behavior at school. A lot of these elementary students struggle academically, behaviorally, and socially. Kids who also only speak Spanish are welcomed by everyone in the club, and are often placed with an older high schooler that is able to communicate with them. Our job in the Amigos club is to set up a role model figure to uplift these students, and bring them positivity. We work hard to make sure every student is involved in both their school work, and working with others during our activity period. In addition, the bonds made between high school students and the elementary students are kept for years, encouraging students from both schools to want to return each year.

Apart from this, Literacy Ambassadors at Mamaroneck High School is another time commitment based community service. Although it was recently started, we have been working hard to figure out how to make the club an effective resource. Students from Mamaroneck High School come together to bring books to younger individuals who aren't able to afford their own mini libraries at home. Our goal is to bring literature in both languages (Spanish and English) to families who are less fortunate. We want kids to feel the satisfaction of having a book at home, that they can read whenever they want. Growing up, I was able to have a mini library at home, and adore all the books that I would reread multiple times. I want to give the same opportunity to younger children who don't have the same advantages I did growing up. Our club began to take action in late November through the beginning of March. I spent 1 hour every week during lunch for club meetings, where I helped plan for our book drop offs. At these book drop off events this club spent 3 hours handing out books to children and families at the event. During our time working with this new club, the holiday season was coming

up, so we thought of wrapping up books, like presents, for kids of different grade levels. We worked on categorizing, wrapping, and labeling these books for our holiday event book drop off. Every Tuesday, at the Community Resource Center, there is a food drive held, which is where we handed out our wrapped books. We handed out about 200 books to children and adults with children back at home. We hoped to add another joyful surprise during the holidays. Our next big step is working towards making summer bags with a book or two, and a couple of reading essentials. We have just received a grant that we will use to provide more books for these kids and help them feel more enthusiastic about reading. Along with this, I have been involved with tutoring younger students at the Washingtonville Alliance Center. Students from Mamaroneck High School come together and tutor students from Mamaroneck Avenue School, Hommocks Middle School, and other schools in Rye Neck (a neighboring town). The tutoring service is available to these younger students Monday through Thursday for an hour and a half, and it was recently started in late September.

Sadly, I wasn't able to go for all four days, so I chose 2 days that worked best for me to come in. I would help students study, write essays, and get the motivation to finish their homework. Keeping these kids excited about finishing their homework helped them want to learn; essentially, by getting it all done, they were able to feel the satisfaction of understanding and finishing their work. This improved their ability to feel like they were capable of finishing their work, which also pushed them towards being better students. I hoped that throughout my service, I was helping kids gain confidence in their own abilities. I believe that all kids are capable of doing great things with the support and determination that they can learn from by the smaller satisfactions, leading them towards the greater ones.

Despite the sudden change in all of our lives because of the COVID-19 virus, I have still tried to keep up with my community service attributes at home. I have started making masks for our local non-profit medical center, the Open Door, here in Mamaroneck. I am part of this amazing club called Spiral Giving, where we look for organizations to support, in return for more opportunities and services for the individuals in our community. This was the first year Spiral Giving had been brought to Mamaroneck High School, and the purpose of this club sparked an interest in me. We had met once a month for three months during our school lunch, which was an hour long. Our first big project was choosing an organization that needed a grant to pursue larger projects. In this club, students learned how to find organizations and write them an invitation to apply for the grant. Sadly, we weren't able to choose an organization, but we still sent the grant to an organization that we thought needed it the most during this pandemic. In addition to the grant, we are also given the opportunity to connect with a variety of organizations that are in need for more volunteers. Along with the masks I have started making, I will soon be tutoring online and making baby blankets for children in shelters in the city. I hope to make an impact during this pandemic since there is so much left to do for people all around the world. The small things go a long way, and it is extremely important to stay active during this tragic pandemic.

In addition to these three or four major clubs I have been committed to, I have truly adored the others I have been a part of as well. Every year, for the past 3 years, I have helped rebuild 3 different schools in the Bronx, New York, on Martin Luther King day. I help brighten the hallways of these schools by adding splashes of color all around. I

hope to work with City-Year --a volunteer based organization bettering the lives of students in unfortunate areas—to continue my mission of proving every student is capable of success through the support of others. I am also part of a club called Art Therapy for Senior Citizens. This club comes together to help brighten the day of many senior citizens, who stay at the Sarah Neuman Senior Center.

We work on art projects and building bonds with these senior citizens, who might not have family come in to see them often. This club met once a month during lunch for an hour, and once a month at the center for two hours. Lastly, I volunteered and went to the Main Idea sleep away camp. This camp is based on giving girls who struggle financially, a chance to experience what going to sleep away camp is all about. I grew up going to this camp, where I learned leadership, social, and everyday life skills. This camp taught me how to become independent, as well as, being able to understand the world we live in. Children from New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut come together every year at this camp with different backgrounds and living circumstances. As a young girl, I looked up to a lot of my counselors and junior counselors because they were the ones guiding me through my path of gaining these strong leadership, social, and life skills. I aspired to become one of these great influencers to these girls coming to camp every year. At a certain age, camp becomes voluntary and you are no longer considered a camper, but instead a junior counselor/counselor. I volunteered at this camp for 2 years, but sadly, I wasn't able to go last year. I will be returning this year in hopes of opening the eyes of many young girls towards their success, and improving their leadership, social, and life skills.

Overall, I am extremely passionate about giving back to my community. I want children in my community to feel well supported by different resources that are available to them. My community service is based around education and empowering the lives of young students to aspire success. Often, children in my community are often left without much support due to their inability to communicate, which I find alarming. As a community, we must come together and build bonds by helping each other rise above any difficult situation. Along with the inability to communicate, various children have parents who don't know much about the resources that are offered to them, which prevent them from getting the support they need. Education is extremely important to me because it is the root to success. We are lucky to be living in a community where our education is a luxury. The mission of St. Vincent's Hospital is reflected in my community service through education and support. I am involved in several resources that value the importance of community service and giving back to our community. Through my service, I am able to say that educational support is the greatest importance of my service. I want to demonstrate to younger children and families that there is no problem with asking for help. I am a first generation student, and as I grew up I began to acknowledge all the great resources I had around me. My goal is to be involved with these resources, and to help spread the word about these great opportunities offered to younger students that they can use to achieve their own goals. I personally struggled with my homework growing up, and my parents didn't understand English too well. Luckily, I had an older sister, so I was able to receive the help and support I needed from my sister. A lot of the students I have worked with, don't have the same circumstances I had growing up, which can lead to vulnerability creating a negative mentality of not being able to succeed. Many students currently attending Mamaroneck Avenue School, as well as Mamaroneck High School, who have dealt with similar

situations before have learned to conquer their problems with what they have. This year, I am currently taking AP Physics at Mamaroneck High School. I worked extremely hard, and pushed through all of the problems I came across, alone. My sister was no longer around to help me because she was away in college focusing on her own work. I still couldn't grasp the material, and was being pushed towards thinking about dropping the class. My parents aren't able to afford a tutor, so I was going to drop the class because I didn't want to bring worry to my parents about the costs of a tutor. One of the assistant Principals at my high school encouraged me to push through the work, but this time, not alone. She helped me find the help I needed to be successful in this class; if I hadn't asked for guidance during this rough patch, I would have just taken the easy way out, benefitting my parents and myself. In many cases, younger children believe the easy way out is not completing their work, which often happens in a state of disparity and frustration when not being able to do something the right way. Children often stray away from the help they need, and push away what holds them back. I was able to go to a resource that was willing to give me both guidance and support, which has helped me grow as a student and become more aware of my surroundings. I want children in my community to feel this support and know that there is always a solution to any problem. I hope to demonstrate my passion for helping others and giving back to my community by setting up a role model figure for numerous young students.