

2020 St. Vincent's Youth Award Winner

Michael Rivituso Rye Neck High School – Class of 2021

My name is Michael Rivituso and since I was 5 years old I have been volunteering for an organization called Swim Across America. Swim Across America raises money to fund cancer research. The Long Island Swim, the chapter to which I volunteer, is the largest SAA event in the country and raises over one million dollars annually. I am passionate about this organization, because cancer is a disease that has claimed millions of lives. Cancer does not discriminate by race, age or religion. Not only does it claim the person that succumbs to this disease, but claims the hearts of the family and friends who must live with the loss of a loved one taken too soon. For me it is personal as well. My grandmother succumbed to lung cancer in 2012.

Swim Across America is my way of fighting this terrible disease and helping those afflicted by it. At SAA, I do many different jobs depending on what is needed. I usually start the morning of the event at 5 am by signing in and then going to the docks to help bring kayaks from cars to the docks. Next, I take a bus over to the other side of the harbor before setting up the sales table with Swim Across America merchandise. I help with anything I can before people begin to come to the merchandise table that I run with my brother. Around noon, the event begins to die down and I help pack everything up before heading home. In total during my high school career alone, I have performed over a total of 112 hours of community service for Swim Across America. My brother and I also captain our own team for Swim Across America which swims at a pool event. Each year we encourage our friends and family to join our team and/or donate to the cause. We hang posters and spread the word in school and around the community and raise money. Each year, our team raises approximately \$10,000.

I have also been involved with the Boy Scouts of America for just as long. The Boy Scout motto is "do a good turn daily". The Boy Scouts have a long history of service and giving back to the community. We often perform service projects at camp sites such as filling wood piles or moving benches. We help at Harbor Clean Up days removing garbage from our community beaches and parks. We volunteer at our food pantry to give to those who are hurting or less fortunate. But all this pales in comparison to the Eagle Scout project. Every boy who wishes to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout must complete a very involved project which includes the raising of funds, buying of material, organizing volunteers and carrying out a substantial project. I have helped on many of my fellow scouts Eagle Scout projects and have recently completed my own. For my project, I beautified the Goddard Room and two bathrooms of the Harrison Presbyterian Church. This took lots of preparation and a whole week of physical work from early in the morning to late at night. By the end of each day, my body would be exhausted from standing and painting all day. The completion of this project wouldn't have been possible without the help and support of my volunteers. In the end, it was worth it to give back to the church that I have been attending for as long as I can remember. In total, I alone accumulated a total of 42 hours of physical and supervisory work and over 30 hours of preparation for this project. However, the volunteers, who assisted on my project, worked a total of approximately 300 hours.

My time spent serving at Swim Across America and the Boy Scouts of America has allowed me to give back to my community and serve others. It reflects the mission of St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester. The people of Swim Across America, my fellow Boy Scouts and myself, like the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester, share a common bond. When together, we are one group working together to better our condition and that of each other, physically, mentally and spiritually. There is a feeling of unity and strength, compassion and respect. We share a commitment to each other and to the present community as well as the future. It is through these organizations that I have learned that together, as a community, with drive, compassion and commitment, we can achieve great things and perhaps, one day, cure cancer.