

2020 St. Vincent's Youth Award Winner

Peggy Helman Rye Country Day School – Class of 2020

For 100 hours over the course of 4 weeks, I worked with the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) on a project to document the elevated lead levels and poor drinking water quality in public schools. Water quality testing was conducted in every New York public school, and I collected data to document and compare the number of water outlets with lead levels over the legal limit and the number of outlets over a newer, lower limit being pushed by the NYLCV. Additionally, I created an interactive story map using ArcGIS technology to easily display this data and expose trends presented by my research. This experience allowed me to further explore my interest in environmental policy and gave me a much deeper insight into how legislators and environmental scientists are able to join together to create long-term solutions for a variety of environmental issues. Since the completion of this project, a bill has been created to enforce stricter water quality parameters for public schools and has been created and introduced into the NY State legislature.

Over the past four years of high school, I have also volunteered for an hour every weekend at the Carver Center in Port Chester, NY to teach piano and trumpet lessons through A-Chord for Kids, an organization at my schools that offers student-taught music lessons to children at the Carver Center. Watching my students garner the courage after a few lessons to join their school's orchestra and become more confident as individuals has solidified my belief that an arts education is invaluable. I have been lucky to have had the opportunity to help foster young students' interest in music and the arts.