



**2021 Recipient ~ Rowan Haffner  
Scarsdale High School, Class of 2022**

This past year I have taken my philanthropic efforts to the next level. I have always had a philanthropic heart, a mind driven to give back to others. I first joined a local community service organization in 6th grade (Lion's Heart). I have held positions of President, Vice President, and Treasurer whilst winning countless awards for both volunteer hours and members who go above and beyond the rest. While since then I have officially logged over 1000 hours of community service (over 250 in the last year), spending my summers at White Plains hospital and weekends feeding the homeless in NYC, I measure my volunteer success not by the hours I've spent volunteering, but by the change and impact created.

Through volunteering at a young age, I realized what volunteering truly meant: not aimlessly running through the motions, attending pre-organized events, but taking the initiative to make a difference. The first official TED talk I ever gave was about this topic precisely: how youth can find happiness through volunteering, and that volunteering was more than just a checkbox on a college application (link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4LCe9uiGj0>). As mentioned above, this past year I used the culmination of all of my previous volunteer experience to create, with the help of two other like minded classmates, my own non-profit organization: Heart for Philanthropy. For once I wasn't attending volunteer events, or donating to other charities, I now was the charity, the leader I once followed. At Heart for Philanthropy the goal is to connect Westchester residents with their philanthropic hearts, collecting donations, organizing events, and raising awareness about local issues.

To date, we have collected, sorted, and donated over 35,000 articles of clothing, and over 10,000 cans of food (more information about Heart for Philanthropy can be seen on the website I created <https://www.heartforphilanthropy.com/>). However, more important than the lessons I've learned running a non-profit - learning how to advertise, manage, and grow an organization by myself- is the change created. The most important lesson I've learned from Heart for Philanthropy and my greater volunteer experience, is the priceless relationship formed with those you help. At Heart for Philanthropy this year we partnered with Grace Church in White Plains, one of the largest food distribution centers in NY, and I have been able to consistently see the donations we collect go into the arms of those in need. I have formed countless relationships with those who come to weekly food/clothes distributions. I've made friends, met mentors, and learned what volunteering really means.

Aside from Heart for Philanthropy and Lion's Heart, I've devoted hundreds of hours throughout high school to receiving a congressional medal. This past year I received the Congressional Bronze Medal of Honor for service in four different disciplines, one of which was solely focused on volunteering. I had to demonstrate my devotion and passion not only for philanthropy, but by creating meaningful relationships and change in doing so. Just recently I surpassed the requirements to

receive the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor to be awarded in Washington, DC at the White house.

I love the mission of St. Vincent's Hospital to help communities and people in need but importantly to support youth volunteerism. The experience of a youth volunteer is truly unique and special and through honors youth volunteers across Westchester, hopefully we can further the spread of youth activism for the future.