

January 17, 2024

Ms. Dahlke
Scarsdale Schools
mdahlke@scarsdaleschools.org

Subject: St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester Annual Youth Awards Application

Dear Ms. Dahlke,

In July of 2022, coming out of the pandemic, I felt disconnected from my grandparents who live abroad. I realized that a lot of other senior citizens must feel the same way being isolated from their loved ones, especially during the holidays. I also noticed grocery stores were throwing away expiring flowers as new inventory came in weekly. For me, these flowers, being in very good condition, could (and should !) be used to brighten smiles around our local community. Creating a sustainable solution to this issue while also catering towards the senior community seemed possible. For those reasons, I founded Bouquet Buddy, a non-profit, local community service that donates flowers to hospitals, nursing homes, shelters, and any place where people need a little bit of happiness, free of cost, around Westchester County.

Partnering with grocery stores and local florists who provide me with expiring flowers that would otherwise go to waste, I repurpose them into arrangements and distribute them. So far, Bouquet Buddy, has delivered about 3,000 bouquets to local facilities such as GiGi's Playhouse, the Hospice of Westchester, Scarsdale Senior Center, Eastchester Senior Center, Bristol Assisted Living, Garth Road Senior Center, Burke Rehabilitation Center, the Kensington, and Atria of Rye Brook. Every week, on Thursday evenings, we collect in the range of 30-75 buckets of flowers from different locations. After school on Fridays and Saturdays, I hand-deliver individual bouquets to the facilities. I often connect with seniors during these visits. They genuinely appreciate the donations and look forward to seeing "the flower boy" each week. It's really a win-win situation because this project was created looking to connect with the senior community, and Bouquet Buddy has done just that. My mom helps drive me to every location and I have gotten closer to my family during this process. Overall, this organization has taught me valuable skills. It has taught me patience, respectful communication with elders, disciplined work ethic and time management. Having delivered thousands of bouquets over the past 20 months has taken over 200 hours, I hope to find a way to keep the Bouquet Buddy going in some form long after I graduate from SHS. If you are interested in learning more about my organization (with photos), please take a look at my instagram account [@bouquet.buddy](https://www.instagram.com/bouquet.buddy).

In addition, since my freshman year of high school, I have also volunteered at the local firehouse to train in fire and emergency services as part of the Scarsdale Fire Explorers Program. I work directly with the well-trained firefighters who mentor me throughout the process. During these sessions, we learn through physical training/drills and about the protocols pertaining to

emergency situations. I have to come to admire and appreciate the volunteer spirit among the Scarsdale community and have trained to do my part one day.

With sincere thanks for considering my application.

Rishi Shadaksharappa