

"I can't believe I'm doing this." A 6th-grade student shared those words with me at the yearly White Plains' Jump in and Swim program. As I watched his eyes glisten and his brilliant smile spread across his face, I saw what I hoped would be the start of a long journey filled with confidence. His words deeply touched me and inspired me to continue my service to the community. The Jump in and Swim program is designed to help children develop basic swimming and safety skills. The program focuses on giving children the opportunity to learn the essential life skills of swimming. For the past two years, I have volunteered around 3 hours per week at the month-long learn to swim program. I taught the students fundamental swimming skills, such as kicking, freestyle, and treading water. This opportunity enabled me to provide the students with words of compassion and motivation.

I also currently volunteer 3 hours a week at the White Plains Hospital Gift shop, assisting the store manager by stocking items and conducting inventory. I greet and help patients, staff, and visitors, hoping that I can brighten their day. By connecting with customers, I am able to provide them with a positive experience. For instance, I was able to assist first-time grandparents in purchasing a gift extremely important occasion: their new grandchild. I was honored to be able to contribute to a moment that will be forever remembered.

Since early 2019, I have managed to serve my school for over 240 hours. I have volunteered in the library shelving books and maintaining the circulation desk. I have created visuals and learning tools, such as grocery lists for the special needs program. The learning tools I created provide the students with exposure to everyday activities. I have also tutored local students after school and inside the study center. As a member of the community service committee in my class, I assisted in formulating a team and fundraising for the Making Strides of Westchester Breast Cancer Walk, where the profits went to breast cancer research.

Outside of school, I have also taken part in several missions totaling around 35 hours. I assisted with donation collections and projects, such as the Midnight Run, food drives, and coat drives at St. Anthony of Padua Church. I collected and organized donations of canned and boxed food, sanitary necessities, and clothing. These efforts were directed toward suffering populations in New York City who did not have support systems. While these initiatives created immediate relief, they also represent a commitment to the less fortunate and resilient world. The Midnight Run fosters a sense of dignity and recognition for every member of the community. I now see community service as something more than just serving the community. I view it as a way to build connections filled with understanding and compassion. In addition, virtually, I have participated in Baking for A Cause, where the donations went to cancer research. I have also created animal toys for the Humane Society of Westchester.

These projects deeply reflect the mission of Saint Vincent's Hospital. The projects I've been involved in have shown me how important it is to give back to those in need in my community and make sure that they're provided with what they need. Through my community service, I have developed a deeper sense of compassion and respect for people. I cherish the personal and moral connection coming from helping others. Service has created a profound learning experience that shaped my values and outlook on life. I have learned the importance of fostering connections and support throughout the community. I look forward to a lifetime of community engagement, wherever my future takes me.