



**2022 Recipient ~ Austin Bergamini
Rye High School, Class of 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences with volunteerism and community service.

I have been raised with values and beliefs that encourage me to think and act for the common good. Throughout my life, I have seen examples from my parents of how simple acts of kindness, and service to others can make a difference. As a result, volunteerism has been a guiding principle in my life, and has inspired my commitment to community service. In addition, part of Rye High School's graduation requirement includes service hours, encouraging students to become involved in our community. I try to incorporate kindness and compassion into various aspects of my life in my relationships with family, friends, academic peers, and within my community. I understand how important encouragement and support can be to someone who is struggling and needs understanding.

My Saturday mornings often begin by reading with students from underserved communities at the Don Bosco Community Center as part of the Read Aloud program. It makes me happy when I can help a child who doesn't like to read out loud realize it is okay to try, and even make mistakes, because trying is what's important, not being perfect. I have been volunteering with this program since I was in 8th grade, guiding K-3 students' reading literacy skills, and confidence building. I also provided recorded reading sessions during the peak of Covid so that my service could continue during restrictions on in-person gatherings.

In addition, I volunteer for Soul Ryeders, a public charity supporting those affected by cancer. On a regular basis, year round, I create no-sew fleece blankets for cancer patients. I also distribute bows for its annual Tie The Town Pink Cancer Fundraising Campaign. I lost two grandparents to cancer, so it is important to me that I can help an organization like Soul Ryeders.

For the past 2 years I have been serving as a Lector for my Church, participating in liturgies by reading Holy Scripture to approximately 400 parishioners. In addition, I volunteer to perform the duties of a Lay Eucharistic Minister, assisting Priests in administering sacraments of Holy Communion during Mass, and I volunteer as an Usher.

One of my favorite ways to serve my community is to volunteer for a riding program at Sky Blue Stables, in conjunction with PATH Int'l, a non-profit dedicated to equine-assisted therapies for individuals with special needs. I assist with therapies that help children with special needs improve balance, posture, coordination, mobility, confidence and self-esteem while riding a horse. I also utilize my American Sign Language skills to communicate with the non-verbal children.

The mission of St. Vincent's is to serve others, and provide compassionate care in an atmosphere of respect and support. I believe my experience with over 175 hours of volunteerism during grades 9-11 accomplishes that, and represents those values. Through service, my goal is to change the lives of others for the better, and change the world.