



**2022 Recipient ~ Avery Hood  
Eastchester High School, Class of 2023**

The Covid-19 pandemic left many people in my community of Haverstraw, NY without their job. Through no fault of their own, many could no longer afford to put food on the table for their family. The pandemic rattled my community and people simply had to get by before jobs started to open back up. My family has never struggled economically and I could not imagine growing up in a household without knowing where your next meal was coming from.

I decided to volunteer at my local food pantry run by the Catholic Charities Community Services of Rockland, because I recognized their vital importance to our community. There was a spot open for two hours on Saturday from 8am to 10am, which included passing out and putting together bags of essential foods. On average I would hand about 60 bags of food to thirty families and in total completed 50 hours at the food pantry. I also volunteered at two others which included 4 hours at a Soup kitchen in Haverstraw distributing food to the hungry during the holidays, and a 2 hour river cleanup which removed a lot of the trash from the a local riverside, which helps all people of Haverstraw to live in a cleaner environment.

One thing that struck me while doing volunteer work was the generosity of the volunteers who continued working through the Pandemic, putting their own health at risk in order to improve the lives of others. I also had the pleasure of meeting the older man who ran the food pantry. He was well into retirement but still managed to work extremely hard to pack bags during the week. It was truly a great experience serving the underprivileged in my community, because it really opened my eyes to the kindness of the human spirit and the necessity to continue funding and supporting these organizations.