



**2022 Recipient ~ Elizabeth Wachs  
Scarsdale High School, Class of 2023**

I engage in numerous activities outside of school that help improve the lives of others. I volunteer at the Backyard Sports Program. The child I personally assist, Edgar, has a severe form of Autism that prohibits him from being able to speak and follow directions properly. When I first met him, he couldn't speak well and it seemed almost impossible to get him to sit down. After working with him for months, Edgar and I have worked together to help him finally pronounce a few names and even sit down. So far, he has been able to sit for a total of three minutes while we listen to instructions from the head coach.

Additionally, I take on various volunteer programs at the JCC where I help children with disabilities. I volunteered in a weekly STEM program where I help disabled kids work on projects that enhance their focus on aspects of science, technology, engineering, and math that will help them in the future. We did science experiments and built miniature robots, among other activities, to help them discover their passions and learn how to communicate.

I also engaged in a weekly J-Stem zoom program for elderly men and women to help them familiarize themselves with today's technology and allow them to properly communicate with their family and friends while they stay in the safety of their homes during quarantine.

The final program I participate in at the JCC is a one-on-one session with a four-year-old boy who has autism and is non-verbal. His name is Isaac. Each week, I help Isaac train in the JCC gymnastics gym. I try to keep him on task while also modifying the exercises, which are being given to the rest of the class, to help suit his abilities. I am very passionate about helping children with disabilities because my brother Ethan has a mild form of Cerebral Palsy. Ever since I was little, I have been taking care of him and helping him adjust to daily life.

Because I have been helping care for him my entire life, I find myself being very empathetic towards others with disabilities as I know how much the help of others has positively impacted my brother throughout his life. Further, I volunteer at the White Plains Hospital, packing care bags and writing cards for pediatric cancer patients and

their families. Since my brother spent a significant amount of time in hospitals getting surgery, I know how much a small deed like receiving a thoughtful card can impact a patient. I also know how much of a toll the hospital stays take on the families; It is difficult for family members to celebrate holidays and birthdays. To help these families better enjoy these holidays, I bake cakes and cookies for birthdays and deliver them to the hospitals so the patients and their families can experience a sense of normalcy.

Lastly, I have been making monthly visits, since ninth grade, to the Pleasantville Cottage school where I am able to bring activities, nutritious foods, and smiles to emotionally troubled boys and girls, ages 7-16. These visits have a really big impact on these children because I am able to engage in more normal conversations with them, allowing them to know that they have real, caring friends outside the unstable environment that they live in.

Overall, I truly enjoy volunteering and all the positive impacts that I can have on others and hope to be considered for the St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester Annual Youth Award.