



2022 Recipient ~ Hanna Schichiano
The Masters School, Class of 2023

When I was younger, I remember my parents would encourage me to come with them to holiday meal distributions at my temple (Temple Shaaray Tefila). For my Bat Mitzvah project, I taught tennis to those with developmental disabilities (which I still do today), and in eighth grade, my religious school class took monthly trips to the Pleasantville Cottage School where we spent time with emotionally troubled children. The Hebrew words tzedakah (meaning "charity" or "philanthropy") and tikkun olam (meaning "repair of the world") are two concepts that have inspired my philanthropic journey. I think that my parents, as well as my Jewish culture, instilled in me the importance of helping those that are not as fortunate as I am.

Richard Leroy, director of social action at my temple, has also inspired me. My family and I went to Puerto Rico with him after Hurricane Maria (summer 2019) to help rebuild parts of the community of Mariana. Leroy was also the one who sent out an email to members of the temple, as the COVID-19 pandemic raged during July 2020, in search of volunteers to help with weekly Feeding Westchester food distributions. The pandemic caused the number of families dealing with food insecurity to be at an all-time high. I was eager to help and spent 10 hours volunteering at the distribution site. Seeing the lines of hundreds of cars that would form at the distributions inspired me to do more to help.

In Oct. 2020, I started a Feeding Westchester fundraiser and have since raised over \$12,000 through multiple bake sales where I sold cookies, brownies, and muffins. I created and distributed flyers that included QR codes for ease of placing a baked-goods order or making a donation via mobile device. I walked around local neighborhoods and placed the flyers in hundreds of mailboxes. In April 2021, I sold Feeding Westchester yard signs for \$50 per sign. I collectively spent 30 hours distributing flyers and baking.

I volunteered for over 60 hours at the Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry (three days per week) throughout the summer of 2021 to help with packing produce, distributions, and stocking shelves. As the weeks passed, I became familiar with the people who came in to receive their weekly groceries, and was happy to know that I was making a difference in someone's life. Over 400 families come to the Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry each week and many in Westchester have to decide whether they are going to pay for rent or buy food-- a choice that nobody should have to make. (I continue to volunteer at the Pantry, as I am available, during the 2021-22 school year.)

This past summer, I also spent 10 hours (two days per week) volunteering to teach tennis to developmentally disabled children at Camp Victory, a similar initiative to my Bat Mitzvah project in 2017-2018. I loved seeing the smiles on the faces of the children after hitting a good shot, as well as seeing their improvement each week. I plan to continue my work at Camp Victory this summer as a full-time counselor (total of 200 hours).

In Aug. 2021, I organized an event at the Fox Valley Town Park in Katonah to support Feeding Westchester's Meals-4-Kids program, which provides meals for children in-need. I reached out to neighbors for help and on Aug. 7 we spent 1 hour packing 500 breakfast and lunch bags.

At the start of my junior year, I founded the Feeding Westchester at Masters club at my school because I wanted to get my community involved in this important cause. I have organized monthly trips to the Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry, for which students can sign-up to volunteer after school (transportation and dinner provided). As of April 2022, Masters students have volunteered for 10 hours at the pantry. It made me happy to hear my peers say "this was the best part of my week" after helping with distributions because this was exactly how I felt.

In Feb. 2022, I organized a Super Bowl Squares fundraiser at school to support Feeding Westchester where students and faculty helped to raise \$150 for the cause. A few days later, I hosted another Meals-4-Kids event, but this time at my school, and it was a very different experience. I raised \$1,000 in gift cards from local supermarkets, including: nine Stop & Shop stores, Foodtown, Decicco & Sons, Decicco Family Markets, Target, and Seasons Scarsdale, to purchase the food for the meal bags. The event was on my mind constantly as I was emailing and calling stores across Westchester to request donations almost daily. From Dec.-Feb., I spent over 50 hours filling-out and dropping-off donation requests, speaking to store managers, picking-up the gift cards, ordering and picking-up the food from the stores. I'm so glad that the event was such a success and that we had a great turn-out of twenty-five students who signed-up to volunteer on Feb.16 from 4-5pm--we collectively packed over 600 breakfast bags for children in-need.

My volunteer work has reflected the mission of St. Vincent's Hospital because I am extremely committed to helping those within my community. I am looking forward to continuing my involvement with Feeding Westchester, the Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry, and Camp Victory throughout the rest of this year and for many more years to come. I continue volunteering and my fundraising efforts because these causes are so important to me. There is no "vaccine" for hunger.