



**2022 Recipient ~ James Barker**  
**Iona Preparatory School, Class of 2022**

When Iona Prep encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone to help others as a freshman, they sent me on a rewarding journey of numerous service opportunities.

During freshman year I volunteered at three organizations: the HOPE Soup Kitchen, to provide food and shelter to the poor and homeless in New Rochelle; The Sharing Shelf, to combat clothing insecurity for low-income children in Westchester; and my church, where I helped with landscaping and cleaning. During sophomore year I became a transportation volunteer at White Plains Hospital in honor of my grandfather, who passed away there. I transported patients, provided stretchers to the emergency room, and delivered blood samples to the lab. I also joined my school's week-long Mission Peru trip to build a house for an impoverished Peruvian family, which included gift wrapping at Barnes & Noble to fundraise for the trip, and securing generous donations of soccer balls from the Red Bulls for the Peruvian children.

During my junior and senior years, I have volunteered at SongCatchers, providing free piano lessons to underprivileged children, teaching them to read and write music, and to prepare for their recitals. We often play games while waiting for all the students to arrive, and I am always moved by the pure joy children receive from something as simple as musical chairs. Their happiness has inspired me to appreciate life's simplest things and remember that spreading love and joy is what volunteering is all about. It also weaves itself into the mission of St. Vincent's by promoting the quality education and dignity for the youngest children in the world. I look forward to volunteering every week, which is where I have met some of my closest friends.

I am grateful for my parents' sacrifices allowing me to attend Iona Prep, because its service-minded Catholic values have completely changed both my perspective and relationship with my community. As I see St. Vincent's commitment to community, I hope to be a pillar of light to those in my own community.