



**2022 Recipient ~ Olivia Ritossa**  
**Sacred Heart Greenwich, Class of 2024**

As a sophomore at Sacred Heart Greenwich, I have only incorporated faith into my new all-girls school life for 2 years. At my old school, community service was not as valued as it was at Sacred Heart, so during my freshman year when I was given the role of community service ambassador, I was anxious that I wouldn't know what I was doing as a shy and passive freshman. But with the help of upperclassmen and the director of community service, Mrs. Bader, I was able to efficiently plan, organize, and host events to raise money and awareness for causes and charities. Having the initial assistance from leaders in my new community helped me to begin to grow as an individual. This position pushed me to be an independent thinker, confident and open-minded communicator, organized planner, as well as a dedicated leader. Even though this process of change was difficult, especially as a new student, I continued to remind myself why I took on this position: because I loved being able to make someone in need's day better and able to make a difference in the world.

In addition to the inclusion of community service into my everyday life, faith also took a more prominent role in my day at my new Catholic school. Through theology classes and weekly chapels I was able to learn so much more about a part of my life that I was ignorant of. At first, like all new things, approaching and understanding this new way of thinking about life was challenging. But with the new traits I acquired through being the community service ambassador, I was able to take initiative with my learning. I decided to meet with my theology teacher after class to further my knowledge on the topics we covered in class, and I made a consistent effort to participate frequently in class. My continuous efforts and persistence resulted in excellence in the freshman class and self-satisfaction that I overcame this hurdle.

Taking theology again, but as a sophomore, continued and fed my love of questioning and learning. I continued to actively participate in class discussions as well as helping my classmates when they had difficulty in class. Having this opportunity to teach my friends about something I cared deeply about opened up another interest to me. I decided to try something new again, and I volunteered

at my parish to teach religion classes to first graders. Although I was devoting 2 hours of my Sunday mornings, I took great joy in spending this time with curious 7 year olds, especially because they shared a common interest with me: learning more about our faith. This service helped me take the skills I applied to learning and practice them during teaching. Although it was my job to teach the children, the children taught me too. They offered different points of view to theological paradoxes and questions even though they were half my age. This inspired me to be the best I could be for them as well as further my knowledge even more. My growth as a learner, leader, and individual could not have been accomplished in these past two years without the position of community service ambassador given to me as a timid freshman at an all-girls Catholic school, which I am so grateful for.