



**2023 Recipient ~ Rachel Katzke  
The Masters School, Class of 2024**

Giving back to my local communities has always been an important part of my life, especially during my high school career. I have done this through my involvement in the arts, the Jewish community, and my local judicial system. The values that are central to my identity, to have compassion for others and a commitment to the community, mirror those that are espoused by St. Vincent's Hospital in Westchester.

Last year I volunteered with Dorot through their Generations Helping Generations internship. Dorot's mission is to alleviate the loneliness many elders feel and it was an initiative I wanted to be a part of as I saw my own grandparents sometimes suffer from isolation. I was part of a group of teens and seniors who met weekly on Zoom to connect. The theme of the intergenerational meeting was speaking and learning Yiddish; as a group we learned Yiddish phrases, sang Yiddish songs, and discussed different Yiddish-related traditions to help understand what was important to the Yiddish speakers. This year I am a part of Dorot's Next Generation Teen Council. We create future intergenerational programming and work to boost Dorot's presence within the Jewish community.

Working to combat hate and antisemitism is also very important to me. As a sophomore I was part of the American Jewish Committee's Leaders for Tomorrow. Through this program we learned about antisemitism and how to advocate for ourselves and stand up against hate. I continued this interest through an organization called Stand With Us where I am on the Teen Leadership Council. As a member, I am planning a future program on a topic of my choice to educate others about Jewish culture and history. The internship allows me to not only learn about current events that involve the Jewish community, but also gives me the resources to educate my peers.

Throughout the past year, I have trained to be a part of the Greenburgh Youth Court. After we completed the training, my peers and I have acted as judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys for fellow teens that have been convicted of nonviolent crimes. I understand the pressures that some teens face and hope to offer understanding and empathy when teens commit crimes.

Lastly, as a former professional actress, the arts have played a valuable part in my life and is something I want others to have access to. I got my start in performing at the Random Farms Youth Theater and the opportunities I had there proved invaluable. Last year I volunteered as a Junior Director for Random Farm's production of 101 Dalmatians for their youngest age group. As a Junior Director, I helped guide the kids through choreography, helped them learn lines, and, most importantly, helped support them as they explored theater. I also assisted backstage by preparing kids for their entrances and guiding them through the backstage areas. I continue to be involved in Random Farms as an ambassador.

All in all, volunteering my time has allowed me to give back to my community in ways that are meaningful to me while connecting with and meeting new people and learning new skills. I thank you for the opportunity to be considered for a 2023 Youth Volunteer Award.