



2023 Recipient ~ Tyler Ziffer
Scarsdale High School, Class of 2024

10,000 diapers and wipes, 400 bags of used clothing, 100 children's coats, gloves, and hats, 100 adult sweatshirts, 50 adult coats, and over 500 toiletry items collected; over 200 meals were made and distributed, all achieved this year. When I helped redesign and launch Baby2Baby three years ago, I never thought this would be obtainable.

I started my community service in elementary school. I volunteered as a sports mentor in a program for young kids with physical challenges. The kids I worked with were excited to play sports but struggled with simple tasks like throwing a ball. Their spirit and motivation to succeed deeply impacted me. Through this experience, I found my love for volunteerism.

At the same time, I was also struggling with a challenge: reading. I was diagnosed with a learning difference called dyslexia. It was a very frustrating and stressful time for me, but helping other kids through this sports program, in turn, helped me; it motivated me to work hard and overcome my learning difficulties. I owe a lot to this initial experience. It shaped my current life, especially my passion for giving back and helping my community.

Currently, I am involved in many different volunteer activities. But it's my leadership in Baby2Baby that gives me the most pride. The ability to supply needed diapers, clothing and food to underprivileged children and families in the Westchester, NY, area has been so rewarding.

Before I started high school, B2B ran as only a fundraising club. They would organize an event like a bake sale or basketball tournament, people would pay money to participate, and the club would donate cash to various local organizations. When I got involved with this club in the 9th grade, Covid hit, and everything changed. We had to find ways to help those in need without gathering to raise funds. During this time, people in the community had time to clean out closets and organize and simplify their lives with fewer material possessions. I had an idea for our club, what if we pivoted and became the "middle person" for supplying goods to those in need?

The suburb I live in had plenty of supply, and I researched neighboring communities to find those who needed the goods the most. I reached out to several local organizations that serve our club's targeted populations, such as 914cares, Lifting Up Westchester, and Bundles of Joy.

These agencies have clothing, food, and diaper banks that supply homeless shelters and school programs. I am responsible for developing partnerships with these organizations.

Then, with my club's support, we organized and collected these needed items from our neighborhoods through social media. We physically picked up from people's doorsteps and created drop-off points in the community. It was truly unique. We couldn't believe how much we collected and were able to donate. Since I made connections with local agencies, they now directly reach out to me and ask for help collecting certain items when they have low supplies, like children's coats, babies' socks, etc. In addition to helping others in my community directly, my club is helping the global environment, which is a big passion of mine. By reusing and repurposing clothing, food, and other goods, we are creating less waste by not using essential environmental resources, i.e., reuse, reduce, and recycle.

Another organization I volunteer for that follows this reuse model is Second Serve. Second Serve is a youth-run nonprofit organization that believes tennis can change an individual's life. I am the regional president of this club. We have members all over the country; we collaborate monthly on Zoom, collecting and redistributing tennis equipment to underprivileged kids in the US and worldwide. I have been involved with this organization for three years and have collected hundreds of used tennis rackets and equipment. I clean and regrip the rackets in fun colors, making them look exciting to new owners.

I have donated to tennis organizations all over the country and the world. One local organization is Backyard Sports. Every Spring, they hold a free tennis clinic at a local college for six weeks. Last year we had 60 kids. I provide all the rackets and volunteer as a tennis coach. I look forward to this experience every year. Most of the kids have never played tennis before.

One ten-year-old boy last year I coached stands out particularly. His mom before the lesson told me he had difficulty paying attention and had trouble at school in class and socially. I felt like I could relate to him through my daily struggles with dyslexia. We started the group lesson, and he was excited to get his racket. He couldn't believe he was able to keep it. I showed the kids how to hold the racket, we did some practice swings, and yes, he wasn't paying attention; I got nervous.... Then I remembered my experience volunteering in elementary school to keep the kids moving, motivate them with praise, and, most importantly, have fun. I made the lesson fun by having the kids play a game of hitting cones and singing silly songs. He enjoyed the lesson so much, and I did, too; my nerves had gone away. The following week, his mom told me he could hardly wait for his lesson. As the weeks went by, he paid more attention, improved, and made some friends in the group. It touched me; I felt proud of my work with him and look forward to seeing him in the spring.

These are just some examples of my current volunteer work. I currently have over 150 hours of community service this year and am striving for a gold presidential award. Some of my other activities are listed below.

Mentor, Backyard Sports Cares
Council Member, Center for Youth Philanthropy and Leadership, UJA
Volunteer, St Bartholomew Church Soup Kitchen
Mentor, The Windward School

Lastly, I plan to focus on nonprofit development and leadership in college. My early challenges with learning and volunteer experiences have sparked my interest; helping others and connecting people with needed resources is important in our community, country, and world.

Similar to St Vincent's mission, my community service work has strengthened my compassion and respect for others, and I hope to help everyone live a dignified life.