



**2021 Recipient ~ Sydney Levy**  
**Byram Hills High School, Class of 2022**

For as long as I can remember, I have been passionate about health care and community service. Years ago, I began volunteering with my family at Blythedale Children's Hospital. We would spend time with patients and coordinate activities such as tie-dying t-shirts and decorating cupcakes. I enjoyed the experience so much that I decided to volunteer there more frequently. Getting to know patients and seeing them smile was inspirational. Prior to COVID-19, I had given over 14 hours of service, and I am looking forward to returning once it is allowed. In the meantime, I have been finding ways to help virtually. Before the pandemic, I co-founded a club for Blythedale at my school. The club made cards and a video for the healthcare workers, created a virtual talent show for the patients, and raised more than \$850 through a virtual 5k run.

In addition to my service work at Blythedale, I have been on the President's Junior Leadership Council (PJLC) at Northern Westchester Hospital for multiple years. The Council helps facilitate the connection between the hospital and the broader community on issues related to public health, safety, and well-being. Last year, I led an effort to create COVID-19 videos for the community that encouraged our peers to find fun activities while staying safe during quarantine. This past summer, I led a group of six students in a Virtual Summer Internship and spent over 50 hours creating multi-media health-related education videos and other resources for all age levels. Leading this project provided me with experience in the health education and communication fields while also helping others by creating a myriad of resources for schools. Currently, the council has bimonthly meetings in which we either hear from a healthcare worker at the hospital or work on a health-related project. I am also one of six members of the Advisory Board. We are responsible for helping to organize and lead the council alongside the hospital staff. So far this year, I have dedicated about 20 hours to PJLC.

In addition to my work in hospitals, I am a student in the Authentic Science Research Program at Byram Hills. My interest in the heart, which I am focusing on for my science research project, was sparked by a personal experience. My father had open-heart surgery to address a genetic heart valve disorder called mitral valve prolapse. Currently, I am working on a review article regarding mitral valve disease with a researcher from the University of Pennsylvania, and I am planning on volunteering as a researcher at the Medical University of South Carolina this coming summer to elucidate mechanically-induced regional fibrosis resulting from mitral valve prolapse. So far, I have spent hundreds of hours on research and plan to spend hundreds more. In the end, I hope that my research will pave the path for treating mitral valve prolapse in a non-surgical way, thereby preventing millions of people worldwide from having to endure surgery as my father did and helping the patients' families as they would no longer have to watch their loved ones suffer.

I am also a member of several leadership committees at my school. Specifically, I have served on a committee run by our principal. One of the areas in which we have focused is trying to reduce the stress of students and enhance their mental health. As we worked to alter the master schedule, I shadowed a student at a local high school to gain scheduling ideas from other districts. Helping students' stress levels and mental health is essential, and I am happy that I was able to contribute to this important work through this committee.

St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester "has maintained its mission of Charity and Excellence in health care in an atmosphere of supported and shared ministry." Through my work in science research and in leadership roles, I strive to work collaboratively with others to make my school, community, and the broader world a better place. I hope to pursue a career in pediatrics, and all of my experiences have helped confirm my interest in serving others with a focus on health and medicine. My work in these fields has made me into the person I am today, and I will work to continue helping others, specifically through healthcare a medicine, for the rest of my life.