



**2024 Recipient ~ Charles Szeliga
Salesian High School**

Since the beginning of my high school career, I've taken full advantage of the service opportunities that presented themselves to me. The switch from public middle school to Salesian High School during a global pandemic was a harsh adjustment, so at the start, service opportunities were in shortage. Despite the service hour requirement being lifted, once I was accustomed to the new environment, it did not stop me from getting a jump start on the new lifestyle.

I remember staying after school at the end of my freshman year, meeting with Mr. Siefring in his classroom in Flaherty Hall, discussing the spark that would start the wildfire of service that was to come later in my high school career. Working Camp Echo Bay was an eye opening experience for a couple of reasons. Completing service hours with friends, I'd managed to strengthen bonds I'd made during a corrupt, socially-distant, freshman year. Also, seeing excited campers eager to be at camp was a fulfilling feeling. Seeing how my hard work paid off in the form of someone else's excitement gave me a sense of accomplishment, and fueled my motivation to continue volunteering. Going into sophomore year, I started jumping at service opportunities left and right. The Salesian Halloween Event was brought back when COVID-19 shut it down years prior. The event brought a familiar feeling with it. That indescribable feeling I experienced at CEB of helping a team for a greater good returned in full force. Seeing those happy children created dopamine hits that continued when I did other activities, such as the Christmas Drive-Through. I was stationed at the top of the hill, collecting donations with my peers as families came to enjoy Santa Claus and the Christmas lights. With over two hundred hours accrued in sophomore year, service became a huge part of my personality. Junior year was a continuation of my sophomore year. When I worked at CEB that summer, I was promoted to a counselor, which meant I couldn't receive service hours for working out with campers. With this in mind, I was able to earn one hundred eighty-eight service hours for the 2022-2023 school year. As someone who is involved at Salesian, having my name out there amongst my classmates and teachers/administrators came to my benefit. In March 2023, I was given the opportunity to participate in the Salesian Leadership Retreat, an exclusive retreat for students who are recognized for their leadership and service successes. This experience changed my life and helped me to unleash my full potential continuing service opportunities. It is not uncommon for Mr. Siefring to call upon my assistance to lead others at school events and organize who does what. Senior year has been more of the same service experiences since the beginning of my Salesian experience.

"We believe in respect and compassion for ourselves and others, excellence and service, the dignity of human life and commitment to the community." is a quote that directly correlates with my journey with service. Whenever I commit my time to assisting others, I always think about the experience I am providing them to ensure they are having a time to remember. I don't want to put my name on something that will ultimately fail, so guaranteeing the enjoyment of those benefiting from my service is important to me. This in mind, the overwhelming feeling of fulfillment I get when I help others is a form of self-care that I thrive on. I can say for certain that in the later years of my life, I will commit to serving my community wherever I go, all coming

back to my years at Salesian High School. opportunities that presented themselves to me. The switch from public middle school to Salesian High School during a global pandemic was a harsh adjustment, so at the start, service opportunities were in shortage. Despite the service hour requirement being lifted, once I was accustomed to the new environment, it did not stop me from getting a jump start on the new lifestyle.

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