

Kaitlyn Horgan - *The Ursuline School*

Throughout my life, I became increasingly aware of the incredible value of service and the importance of giving back to the community. I have dedicated my time to addressing food insecurity, volunteering at various fundraisers for St. Cabrini Nursing Home, St. Vincent's Hospital, and the Maxwell Institute, and leading ministry activities and spiritual retreats at my school. These experiences have been deeply meaningful, not only because they allowed me to support others, but also because they shaped my values, strengthened my faith, and opened my eyes to the profound struggles that so many people face.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my service has been my involvement in food drives. Hunger is a widespread issue that affects many people in our community, often in ways we do not realize. Before volunteering, I did not fully understand how significant this problem was right in my own backyard. By collecting, sorting, and distributing food donations, I helped ensure that those who were struggling could access nutritious meals. Seeing the gratitude of those we served was deeply moving and reminded me of the inherent dignity and value of every human life—an ideal that reflects both my Catholic faith and the mission of St. Vincent's Hospital.

When I was in grammar school, I began visiting elders at St. Cabrini Nursing Home who had no family. When I realized how much my weekly visits meant to them, I asked other classmates to join me. What began as an after-school carpool eventually turned into weekly bus trips, filled with students from Kindergarten to Eighth Grade, to visit the nursing home residents, alleviate loneliness, and spread cheer. Since that time, I have had many opportunities to serve at fundraising events for various nonprofits, including St. Vincent's Hospital's annual Spring

Sprint, Luncheon, and Fashion Show, as well as volunteering at community education events for The Maxwell Institute, which provides crucial resources for individuals struggling with substance abuse and behavioral health challenges. These experiences opened my eyes to the pervasiveness of mental health and addiction struggles in our society. St. Vincent's Hospital, founded by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in 1879, remains committed to delivering excellent behavioral health care in an atmosphere of respect and compassion. I feel a strong connection to their Catholic mission and continue to be inspired to contribute to the efforts to help those facing these prevalent and often stigmatized battles.

Throughout my time in high school, I have dedicated close to 200 hours to these initiatives. Whether it was ensuring someone in need received a meal, assisting in raising funds for critical health services, or helping others connect with their faith, each act of service has aligned with the mission of St. Vincent's Hospital and my school's motto, *Serviam*, which means "I will serve."

In addition to my direct community service, I have found great solace and purpose in my spiritual life by leading and organizing spiritual retreats, the Liturgy of the Word, and adoration at my school. Through prayer, I have strengthened my own faith while also sharing it with others, offering a source of peace and reflection to those who seek it. My ministry has been a reminder that service is not only about physical acts of charity but also about providing emotional and spiritual support. Following the legacy of the Sisters of Charity, who were led by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, I am honored to have played, and continue to play, a role in their tradition of providing care for the most vulnerable, both spiritually and mentally. Through my involvement with these initiatives, I have witnessed the profound impact

of even the smallest actions. Service has not only helped others but has also transformed me into a more empathetic and understanding individual.

These experiences have inspired me to continue serving others, both now and in the future. They have taught me that by putting compassion and faith into action, we can create meaningful change in the world. In the spirit of St. Vincent's mission, I hope to carry these lessons with me throughout my life, making a difference wherever I can.