



# **2020-2021 Service Awards**



January 27, 2021

On this Feast of St. Angela Merici, it gives me great pleasure to announce the recipients of the 2020-2021 Ursuline Education Network *Service Awards*. The young women whose first names are listed here were nominated by personnel in their respective school for their outstanding contribution of service to their community. As you read their essays describing what they have learned, you will understand why these students were chosen. Not only are they exemplary students in their academic achievement, but they have chosen to live "*Serviam*" in their lives. These young women will be recognized by their schools as well as by UEN where they will receive a beautiful certificate and medal to be worn on their uniform. Please take the time to read these essays and join me in congratulating these women! They are very special students!

Rosann Whiting  
Director  
Ursuline Education Network

## **Listing of Schools and Essay Authors**

- [Ursuline Academy-St. Louis](#): Anna, Hannah, Kathleen, Lea
- Beaumont School: Carlson, Lydia
- [St. Ursula Academy-Cincinnati](#): Lindsey
- [Ursuline Academy-Wilmington](#): Audrey, Meg, Samiah
- [Ursuline Academy-Dallas](#): Anna, Marissa, Juliana, Claire, Jamie
- [Ursuline Academy-Dedham](#): Caroline, Tara
- [Ursuline Academy-Cincinnati](#): Abi, Clare, Hollee, Natalie
- [Saint Ursula Villa](#): Sophie
- [Mount Merici Academy](#): Katherine
- [The Ursuline School New Rochelle](#): Mary, Olivia, Millicent, Jannett, Jennipher
- [Ursuline Academy-New Orleans](#): Cassidy, Olivia
- [Mount Merici Academy](#): Katherine
- [St. Ursula Academy Toledo](#): Jakya
- [Academy of Mount St. Ursula](#): Tyler, Lauren, Zanyda, Annette, Sarai, Krisna, Lexie, Analisa, Amanda, Sherilyn
- [Sacred Heart Louisville](#): Anna, Claire, Grace, Helen, Haylen, Lexis, Reese

## **Ursuline Academy-St. Louis**

Back in January of 2020, I applied for a ten-week service program at Catholic Familyland in Steubenville, Ohio. I have been going to the campground every summer since I was 9 and is my “home away from home”. After an anxious two months of waiting, I got my acceptance right before mandated quarantine was put into place. I was not sure what to expect of the summer given the new restrictions and protocol due to COVID-19, or if the service program was even allowed to still take place. We were given the all-clear mid-May, and I arrived at the camp on May 31st to start 10 weeks that drastically changed my outlook on service and what it truly means to me. Before this summer, I had completed over 120 hours of service throughout my three years of high school, however, I did not fully comprehend the true value of service. Before this program, Service was not a value truly engraved on my heart, rather, it was only a number of hours collected on MobileServe. Throughout the 10 weeks of my program, I was taught the true definition of having a servant’s heart in giving completely of myself so others could receive. I learned how to be flexible in all roles where I was needed, from cleaning cabins and bathhouses to gardening and groundskeeping. Although the work was tedious and tiring, I found joy in even the most mundane of tasks because I knew their purpose had an importance far beyond my own desires. I remember sending a letter to my mom in which I joked about how I quickly learned the definition of what it means to have a servant’s heart after I had to mop the extremely dirty men’s bathhouse by myself which is funny but also very true. Tasks such as that, which contributed in an indirect way were what really changed my outlook on service as I could not see their immediate impacts as I had previously in the service I had

completed.

I also learned a quote from Saint Mother Teresa that really inspired me this summer as I changed my perspective on what service truly means. The quote states, “Wash the plate not because it's dirty, nor because you are told to wash it, but because you love the person who will use it next”. This quote replayed in my mind over and over again, especially as I was cleaning what seemed like a never-ending stack of trays! Not only did this teach me so much about service, it also led to a deep spiritual growth in my faith, as I discovered the connection between service and faith. I put love into every way I served, because I knew each person I was serving was one of God’s children and as Matthew 25:40 says, “Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me”. Since coming back home, I have tried to apply what I learned this summer in my daily life, by putting others before myself and serving my community. (Hannah)



I am a proud member of *Youth in Action*. *Youth in Action* is a nonprofit organization that helps a variety of organizations such as make a wish, nurses for newborns, shop with a cop, operation backpack, etc. *Youth in Action* is always participating and supporting local organizations in need and is constantly fundraising money for those in need. *Youth in Action* is not just an organization, but it is a family. All my fellow members and the director have such a love for service and it truly is infectious. I have been so grateful to have my sister introduce me to this wonderful organization where I have been able to impact other people's lives behind the scenes. I have participated in fundraising for 3 wishes for Make-a-Wish and whether we were doing a carwash or a lemonade stand it felt amazing to be working for a great cause and knowing that our hard work would bring joy to a kid. *Youth in Action* has shown me my love for service and how I want to always help others. IT has taught me that kindness and heling others goes a long way because you never know what other people are going through. It has helped me grow to be a better person and be as selfless as possible. It is so comforting to know that organizations like *Youth in Action* are supporting those in touch situations and truly everyone is never alone. (Anna)



I tutor a 5th grade boy from Syria. Although there's a slight language barrier between us, his first language being Arabic, and second language English, I've really enjoyed our time working together, and we've connected regardless. I've learned a number of things through our weeks of tutoring but have been most touched by seeing this boy ecstatic and ready to learn and show off his skills, a trait that I recognize in every child I've seen who speaks any language.

Oftentimes we will play math games or look into a subject neither of us are knowledgeable about to find a way to connect it to our lives. What I've discovered and taken from this experience is that human connections defy language barriers. (Kathleen)



I have been working with *St. Louis Association for Gifted Education* (SAGE) since I was in 7th grade. It is an organization run by Dr. Agnes Meyo, who was my psychologist when I was younger. This organization is very special to me because I can relate to the people that I work with. I am an intellectually “gifted” kid myself. Gifted kids often struggle with finding friends and being able to fit in. By having these groups every Saturday, we allow the kids to have a group of people who they can socialize with and feel comfortable being themselves around. The group also focuses on different social skills and aids the kids in practicing how to use them. Gifted kids often feel out of place in a social setting and don’t know how to behave so practicing these skills is very beneficial, especially to the younger kids. We used to meet in person every Saturday, but because of COVID we now meet over Zoom. I recently led one of the Zoom meetings. We were talking about different personality types and I led the group in taking a personality test. In my Christian Lifestyles class, we learned about the enneagram personality test and I thought it would be good to share with the group. It was really fun to see everyone’s different personalities and compare that to their enneagram test results. I am so happy that I have gotten involved with this wonderful organization and am able to be a friend to these amazing kids. (Lea)





## **The Ursuline School-New Rochelle**

The motto of the Ursuline School is *Serviam* which means “I will serve”. For this reason, I have undertaken many service projects and activities during my time at the Ursuline School. I feel that one of the most important things that I can do in my life is to be Christ-like in my faith and service to others. Christ teaches us to always show kindness, love, compassion, and care to all, especially to those in need. Therefore, I try to always be a model of Christ in my service to others. In addition, I try to be like St. Angela Merici, a woman of faith and hope, in my service to others. I approach each service activity with the faith and hope that the work that I do will help to better the lives of others. I believe that every action of Christ-like service to others is an action that can make a difference in a person’s life. It is through these small acts of faith, hope, and kindness that we can change the world little by little and make it a better place for all.

One service activity that I have consistently taken part in during my freshman and sophomore years at the Ursuline School is the Polar Plunge to benefit the Special Olympics. The Special Olympics is an organization that provides programming in sports, health, education, and community building to people with intellectual disabilities. The work of the Special Olympics tackles the inactivity, stigma, isolation, and injustice that people with intellectual disabilities often face. Their work goes far beyond sporting events to drive social change by enabling full social participation for people with intellectual disabilities. These are some of the reasons why I felt that it was so important to become involved in fundraising for the Special Olympics. Therefore, I volunteered to participate in the Polar Plunge in both November 2019 and

November 2020. Last year I raised \$550 to benefit the Special Olympics, and this year I raised \$795 to benefit this great cause. I felt that participating in the Polar Plunge and running into freezing cold water was the least that I could do to help those with intellectual disabilities have an opportunity to fully participate in programs and activities like sporting events. The motto of the Polar Plunge is “Freezin’ for a Reason.” What better reason is there to be freezing than to help and benefit others in need? I felt the hand of God guiding me as I ran into the freezing cold water of the Long Island Sound in November 2019 on the morning of the Polar Plunge. I wanted to be Christ-like in my determination to participate in the Polar Plunge in order to help others. I was following the model of St. Angela Merici in trying to put the needs of others before my own, and it was an extremely rewarding and fulfilling experience for me. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic this year, I wasn’t able to “plunge in person.” However, I was able to participate in a virtual Polar Plunge for the Special Olympics. I was very proud to raise \$795 for the organization this year. The pandemic didn’t stop the resolve of the Ursuline School’s Polar Plunge team to continue participating in this very worthy cause, and I felt blessed to be able to do my part to help the Special Olympians.

Another service activity that I consistently participated in at the Ursuline School both last year and this year is the Social Action Club. I tried to make it a practice to attend every Food Drive that the Social Action Club sponsored both last year and this year. When I was a freshman during the 2019-2020 school year, I enjoyed helping collect food, toiletries, and household items at each biweekly food drive. I always tried to bring as much food as possible to donate to the food drive as well as to encourage my peers to help at the food drive and to donate food as well. When the pandemic hit last March, the Social Action Club figured out a way to conduct

biweekly socially distanced food drives for the food insecure. This was especially important during the pandemic because there were more people who were suffering from food insecurity than ever before due to the economic impact that the pandemic had on families. Even though I was a bit apprehensive about attending the socially distanced food drives in person due to the pandemic, I wore a mask, and I decided that Christ would want me to help others, especially at this extremely challenging time. One of the Corporal Works of Mercy is to feed the hungry. I knew that it was very important for me to continue engaging in this Corporal Work of Mercy, and I knew that I would be protected by God in my ministry of service to others. I also remembered that service above self is a motto that I always try to live by. Therefore, I faithfully began attending the biweekly Socially Distanced Food Drives in the senior parking lot of the Ursuline School from late March through mid-June of 2020. These events came to be some of the most meaningful service activities that I have ever participated in because I felt the impact of the pandemic and how important it was, especially at that time, to do whatever I could to help others.

Last year I also helped to decorate the Elizabeth Seton Children's Hospital for their annual Christmas party. The mission of the Elizabeth Seton Children's Hospital is to give a full and happy life to children who have some of the most challenging and limiting medical conditions on earth. The Elizabeth Seton Children's Center treats medically complex children in a residential setting. Therefore, our mission was to help decorate the children's hospital for their annual Christmas party. I thoroughly enjoyed helping to bring the joy, wonder, and magic of Christmas to the children at the Elizabeth Seton Children's Hospital. It was amazing to witness the happiness and delight of these children when they saw the way that we decorated their

recreation room in order to bring them some joy at Christmas. I was also awe stricken by the doctors, nurses, therapists, and other caretakers at the Elizabeth Seton Children's Hospital. Their love and compassion for the children in their care was truly beautiful to see. I realized that they have a truly special mission. They are Christ-like in their care for children, and my participation in this activity helped me to feel the faith and hope of St. Angela Merici. Although we are not able to return to the Elizabeth Seton Children's Hospital for Christmas this year due to the pandemic, I hope to be able to return there as soon as possible because the work of Christ is truly being done there, and I want to be able to help the children there as much as I can as well.

Another service activity that I participated in during the Christmas season at the Ursuline School last year was spreading holiday cheer to the residents of the United Hebrew Home in New Rochelle. It was especially significant to participate in this activity because one of the residents of the United Hebrew Home is a beloved Ursuline Sister. We traveled by the Ursuline bus, wore Christmas sweaters and Christmas hats, sang Christmas carols with the residents, and shared cookies with them as well. It was so special to be able to share Christmas joy with the residents of the United Hebrew Home. I felt especially blessed to meet the beloved Ursuline sister because she was so delighted to see us and to gather together with us singing Christmas carols. All of the residents that we met at the United Hebrew Home in New Rochelle were so excited to see us, sing with us, and share Christmas cookies with us. Many of them expressed that they don't frequently get to see family and friends, so it makes them so happy when they receive visits from groups like ours. It makes them feel very special. That made me realize that all too often we tend to forget those who are sick in the hospital or living in nursing homes and

long-term care facilities. I realized that it is so important to visit these people and minister to them as much as possible. After all, one of the Corporal Works of Mercy is to visit the sick. Although not all of the residents of the nursing home were sick, I felt like I was engaging in one of the Corporal Works of Mercy by visiting the residents of the United Hebrew Home, singing Christmas carols with them, and bringing them some holiday cheer.

One of the most important service activities that I have participated in during my two years at the Ursuline School is lifting my voice to God during liturgies both in school and at my home parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Scarsdale, New York. At school I joined the Cantor Club last year as a freshman, and I sang with the cantors at every school liturgy that we had last year. I felt like there was no better way for me to express my love, faith, and joy to God than to lend my voice to the music ministry of our school during liturgies. When I sing during liturgies, I feel closer to God. It is beautiful to be able to praise God in song. There are hundreds of references of singing within the Bible. If I am called to replicate the character of Christ, I'm confident that singing should always be involved. I have also learned that the act of singing uses both parts of the brain, therefore singing can educate me and teach me about the gospel of Jesus Christ while I am also praising Christ at the same time. Singing also connects us emotionally. Music has a way of piercing into the deep parts of my soul, and this assists in my expression and response to God and to the church. For this reason, I believe that singing helps unite me to the church. As we gather together in liturgy, we join together as one body, and praise God with one voice. We recognize that God gives each of us different gifts, and I have decided to use my gift of singing to praise God in both school liturgies and liturgies at my parish. When I am singing with the Cantors at the Ursuline School or with the choir at Immaculate Heart of Mary,

I often think of Psalm 96. “Sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord! Bless His name!

“Share the news of his saving work every single day!” This psalm inspires me and makes me want to continue my volunteer activities singing with Cantors and in my church choir. I feel that this is especially important during the pandemic. In late June when we were able to return to church for mass once again, the choir director of my church reached out to the choir and said that she had received clearance for eight choir members to return to singing in the church choir every Sunday at mass. I immediately decided to heed this calling and to return to singing with the church choir every Sunday morning at 10:00 am. Although the pandemic was still a reality, I knew that it was extremely important for me to return to singing in the choir each week and to lend my voice to praising God. I felt that it was more important now than ever before to sing to God every week in praise, worship, and thanksgiving. My ministry of song is one of my strongest connections to Christ, and one of the ways that I am most dedicated to my mission of serving Him and serving others.

I was driven to do service work by my desire to help others and to make a difference in the world. I have seen first-hand what a difference it makes to be kind to others and to do small acts of kindness and compassion that can positively impact another person's life. For this reason, I think that it's important to engage in acts of service as often as possible. I also think that I can learn a great deal through participating in acts of service, and I can make strong friendships and have strong bonds with others in the Ursuline community who have a similar passion for community service and for helping others.

I strongly believe that whenever possible, it is important to participate in acts of service that benefit the lives of others. I think that the service that I have engaged in thus far has made me a better person because it has made me kinder and more compassionate toward others. The more service that I engage in, the more I learn about different communities and their needs. This helps me to be more empathetic and knowledgeable about the needs of others and how I can help. I also think that participating in acts of service for others helps me realize how fortunate and blessed I am and how much I have to be grateful for and thankful for in my life. This too helps to make me a better person. In addition, I think that participating in different acts of service and different service projects and activities help me to broaden my horizons by meeting new people and working together with different groups of people on different service projects and initiatives. This also helps to make me a better person and to be more Christ-like in my life each day. (Mary)



### **Ac Fui, Servavi\***

We live in a world in which good and evil live alongside one another, always battling it out. There can be moments in which one can overcome the other, temporarily blanketing the world in its image, but the triumph is never long lived. One way or another, the other will quickly taint the image that had been so carefully crafted soon after, destroying it until nothing remains. For good and for bad, this makes both adversaries share the spotlight, not always having to be shrouded in the shadow of the other. This allows us to spot the pockets of bad that will always lurk throughout the world, like the death of a loved one or the betrayal of a friend, but in turn, it also allows us to see the pockets of good, like the smile of a mom as she holds her baby for the first time, or the laugh of a little boy as he's told some ridiculous joke. These pockets of goodness can be found everywhere, speckled throughout the vastness of the world to our own little lives. Unconsciously, we cherish them, holding them close to our hearts and seeking them as we live, making these pockets of goodness one of the greatest gifts one may receive in this world. As much as I seek these pockets of goodness as much as the next person, I also wish to give them to others.

I have found that one of the greatest and most profound ways to bring pockets of goodness to others is through volunteering. When one volunteers, they give up their spare time to create pockets of goodness for others. They put aside their own needs and desires to give someone else their own. Volunteering is not just the conventional idea of going to someplace and helping others out; it is a range of various actions that can be completed in any way that brings even the tiniest flicker of joy into the life of someone else. As a person who strives to introduce good into the world, I find it my civic responsibility to help others in any way I can.



I have always had a desire to help others out. Whenever someone seemed down, I would offer them a smile and a few kind words. If someone was confused on homework, I would try to help them understand it. At my elementary school, there was something called teacher's helpers, which consists of some of the older children who go and help out the teachers during their recess. I remember I always volunteered to be a teacher's helper for the last few years that I had attended this school and eventually got my other friends involved in it as well. These actions, though small, were mighty beginning steps to paving the way to my journey of enlightenment and the formation of early leadership skills. I guess this desire I have can be only described as altruism. I have my mom and my grandmother, Oma, to thank for this.

Both my mom and Oma have always donated and gave to others whenever they could. Each year, the skating organization I am a part of has a pajama drive. My mom has always made sure I showed up with pairs of new pajamas to donate. With Oma, I remember going to Church every Sunday and having her hand me envelopes of money to put into the basket, one from my family and one from herself. Oma has always served as my religious role model and she constantly reminds me to let my faith guide my actions. My mom and Oma's model of altruism has encouraged me to follow in their footsteps in giving to others and has instilled in me my altruism along the way. Looking back at the very beginning, my only wish is that I had done more from a younger age. I realize that I would only ever push myself beyond what my family instilled in me to do. I would never involve myself in anything more than convenient actions that I could take at the moment, not realizing how much more potential I had. Taking my desire to help others further became a thought at the back of my mind, my own troubles clogging up the frontline until 7th grade approached and I received a fresh new perspective on everything.

In 7th grade, I transferred to a new school. This school offered a few clubs that met every Friday which we were all encouraged to go to. At first, I had no intention of joining a club, but one of my teachers convinced me to try it out and I ended up joining MISH. The focus of MISH was to formulate and act upon ways that we could give back to our community and we achieved this through holding several bake sales and a can collection. We donated all the money we received from the bake sales to organizations such as the Susan G. Komen Foundation and the cans from the collection to a local food pantry. Joining MISH was the first step in my service journey making me realize that I could volunteer beyond what I had believed was the conventional way. I grew excited at all of the opportunities I had to give back to the community through MISH and often shared my ideas at our meetings every Friday. My final idea before parting from this school was the construction of a book box on the campus.

I took a genuine liking to volunteering from MISH but had not formulated a rooted love for it quite yet. MISH was a great starting point for my adventure, but my true love for volunteering came during the upcoming summer. One of the requirements for me to make my Confirmation was 20 hours of community service. I knew that it would be difficult to volunteer during the school year with the combination of schoolwork and my extracurricular activities, so I decided to get the majority of my hours done during the summer. I started researching nearby organizations that I could volunteer at and found one called Bundles of Joy. Bundles of Joy (BOJ) is an organization that provides essentials to new mothers who don't have the necessary provisions to raise their babies. I immediately loved the heartwarming and affectionate message behind the organization and decided to give it a try. From the moment I had walked into BOJ and laid my hand on that first piece of clothing, I knew that my time spent here was not going to be

an unpleasant experience that so many kids were forced into, but instead an enjoyable one that I could look forward to. I was filled with a sensation that I could only describe as holiness, one I had rarely experienced before, as I began to work the time passed by all too quickly. Before I knew it, my first two hours or so of volunteering were over and I left the place feeling more alive than ever. I returned multiple times after that first one and continued to go back even after I had finished my hours.

Volunteering at BOJ became something so much more than a way to get in my hours for Confirmation. It became a second home to me and made me feel like I was a part of something so much larger than myself. As I volunteered again and again, I felt myself growing stronger in my faith and becoming a better person. I was proud of what I was doing and the ways in which I was helping so many people. Eventually, I became a BOJ Junior Ambassador and helped out whenever I could. I spent countless hours sorting clothes, unpackaging and retagging them, organizing materials, etc. and every single one of my hours there was worth it. After some time of volunteering there, I even got my friends and my family involved as I was able to share my joyful experience with them. Volunteering at BOJ has helped me in so many ways and I will forever be grateful that I decided to volunteer there during the summer of 2019.

Along with volunteering at Bundles of Joy, I also decided to volunteer at senior citizen luncheons that my local parish Saint Joseph's held often. At these luncheons, I got to help make sandwiches, distribute food to the people who would attend, greet them, and make sure they had everything they needed for the moment. There were always other kids who were volunteering at the luncheons with me who I enjoyed interacting with and getting to know and I loved meeting all of the people who attended. My mom recalls that I could not stop talking about how much fun

the first luncheon was on my way home from it. These luncheons deepened my love for volunteering further, quite literally bringing me back to the heart of it all.

Recently during quarantine, I have wished more than ever to help others out during these troubling times. One of the ways was through Ursuline's bi-weekly weekend food drives. At these food drives, I assist in gathering the donated food from our Ursuline community. I enjoy the process: receiving the donations, being a minor part of getting them to their final destination and sharing in the joy of volunteering with my friends. The other two ways I volunteered during quarantine was through writing messages for Meals on Wheels and nursing home patients. Meals on Wheels delivers meals to elderly people who cannot physically obtain them. I made 100 uplifting written cards that were included with the delivered meals. I also sent a letter to a woman in a nursing home because I know how lonely many people at the nursing homes are feeling since their relatives cannot visit them. I hope my letter brightened the day of the woman I sent it to. These experiences have provided me with a light in the darkness during this time and are the first of many that I hope to encounter on my road of volunteering that I will continue to pursue throughout my future.

There was one significant moment during this journey that I have not talked too much about which is just as crucial as the rest: Ursuline. The schools I attended before Ursuline never explicitly encouraged me to help out beyond what's considered the courteous thing to do, but Ursuline has and continues to push me to go beyond this standard. The Ursuline School stems from the teachings of Saint Angela Merici who founded the Order of Ursulines back in 1535. Saint Angela's goal back then when she created this religious order was to educate young women about the importance of God and creating a relationship with Him. The goals of Saint

Angela continue to shine through Ursuline today, especially through the school motto Serviam (I will serve). Serviam is one of the many ways the Catholic community can not only reflect God's will, but also use it as a way to get closer to him. One of God's major intentions for us as people is to spread his goodness throughout the world. Volunteering is one of the ways that we can help and Ursuline is an excellent model and reminder of all of the ways in which people can do so. The ever -present message of Serviam which is reflected through everything Ursuline has to offer has rooted in me my desire to volunteer and has me always thinking of ways I can fulfill it. It has become one of the many inspirations for me to continue to volunteer in any and all ways that I can. Ursuline is truly a pocket of good in the world which I'm so grateful and blessed that I get to experience. The school serving as a model for my volunteering and always reminding me to do so has made it a crucial part of my journey and for this I'm grateful I will be able to give back to the school that has given me so much in the short year and a half I've been here.

My journey of enlightenment has had many impacts on my life that have shaped me into the person writing this today. My family imprinted in me the basics of volunteering at a young age which taught me to always be kind and that even small acts of kindness can have huge effects. MISH introduced me to the various ways in which I could help others, teaching me about all of the possibilities within volunteering, how people coming together can result in great things, and responsibility. Volunteering at BOJ has taught me how volunteering can unlock the holiness inside of you and how enjoyable volunteering can be. When volunteering at my local parish, I saw firsthand how what I did can make others so joyous and learned the values of talking to a group of people I normally wouldn't interact with and how close I can get to God through volunteering. At the Ursuline food drives, I learned how I can continue to help amidst absurd

times, how my school carries out the message of Serviam, and just how much others love to volunteer as well. Sending the letters to Meals on Wheels and writing the letter to the woman in the nursing home helped me understand that there's always some way to help, how I can still interact with others from my home, and how to be more grateful for what I have.

Through volunteering and learning these lessons, I have been able to mature into the person I am today and have been able to gain a new perspective on the world. Here I am now, a changed person from the one who walked into MISH two years ago, with plans to further my volunteering journey. I'm going to continue to volunteer at BOJ and at the Ursuline food drives. These places have already given me so much and I want to give back to them just as much as they have given to me. My next initiative, as a Junior Ambassador, is to coordinate a drive at Ursuline to collect materials such as diapers, clothing, etc. for BOJ. I would love to have this happen someday. I've also joined the Student Council where I hope to practice my leadership skills and use it as an outlet to carry out my ideas. Finally, I want to use all of the experiences I have now to perhaps open my own nonprofit organization one day. With anything in life, this will prove difficult to do. You can never completely extinguish the good or bad from anything, but with a strong history of volunteering behind me and perseverance, I hope to make this dream into a reality. I want to say thank you, to my family, my friends, to Ursuline, to Saint Angela, and to the altruism that was born in me so long ago. I wouldn't be here today without you all.

\*The title translates to "I was there, I was a part, I have served". (Olivia)





## **The Message of Service**

To say that Ursuline is just a school would be a gross misrepresentation that undermines everything Ursuline stands for. Ursuline not only provides a safe space that cultivates learning and expressing yourself, but it also provides spiritual gratification and self-improvement. I have attended The Ursuline School of New Rochelle for three years, and I am proud to be an Ursuline student. While the school continues to give me a rigorous education, I have found that I have felt most rewarded when I developed spiritually and emotionally through embodying the message of *Serviam*. The message of service as a means to help those around you and develop yourself has been embedded into an Ursuline education since its founding. Through helping those in need in NYC and outside of America, I am able to broaden my understanding of the world around me, humble myself, and in turn, understand my faith better.

In New York, I help in several different ways. I participate in the Ursuline food drives as often as possible, whether it be donating food or helping to load the food truck. I am a member of my community's Youth Committee. I contribute there by creating ways to make Co-op City a more stimulating and rewarding place for its youth. One of the committee's main goals is getting a Homework Help Center established and run by older youth in the community. I personally would be volunteering my time by helping teach the subjects of English and history. The volunteering that has been the most impactful to me was sorting items with New York Cares at a warehouse in the South Bronx. I spent five hours there organizing canned food, school supplies, kitchen products, and home goods that were brought. These items were bought with the money the organization receives from donations. There were a few other volunteers there, but not enough to make the warehouse noisy or full. The warehouse was dead silent because everyone

has their headphones on, and it was the perfect space for reflection. The first thing I thought about was how much product was there. It took us five hours to organize it all. It reassured me that there were good people in the world. Due to some of the things I have been through in life, I tend to always focus on the negative. At that time volunteering, it was in my nature to expect that humanity always had the worst intentions. Volunteering at this warehouse seeing how people were willing to donate money and products for the greater good of other people was inspiring. I thought about how I need to have faith in the good of humanity even if at times I have seen the worst of it. I came to the conclusion that no matter how many vile people there are, I like to think there is always one better person to highlight the best of humanity and trump the worst.

Outside of New York I had another volunteering experience in the Caribbean. In 2019, I visited my father on the island of St. Maarten for a week. I was lucky enough to visit during the island's carnival season. My Godfather runs a food stand and several bouncing castles during the children's day celebration. I had the pleasure of helping him run the massive event that year. I contributed by overseeing one of the inflatable rides and by re-stocking products at the concession stand. The experience was unique because it exposed me to people of a different culture. From interacting with the other volunteers, I worked with and the patrons I helped serve, I learned selflessness. I had worked seven hours in the boiling heat. I would be lying if I said the smiling faces of cheering children made up for the heat stroke. These service hours reminded me that service is not always going to be easy or immediately rewarding, but that is where I am most reminded of my faith. Jesus' life is a perfect example that service is not always easy. Jesus was outcasted, ridiculed, and died on the cross for the sake of all humanity. His selfless acts give us all a chance to enter heaven. To humble myself and serve others even when it was physically





demanding meant I could attempt to further understand Jesus' life and how to live as a better Christian.

*Serviam* is a message that I have tried to incorporate into my life in order to strengthen my character, integrity, and the well-being of the communities I participate in. I firmly believe in the message and the impact it has not only on my life, but the lives of those in and around the Ursuline schools across the globe. From my experiences in New York to the Caribbean, I have learned that through helping others I help myself get closer to God. I am honored to be nominated for such a noble scholarship. Regardless if I receive the scholarship, I will continue to devote time to service and the Ursuline message of *Serviam*. (Jannett)



### A Reflection on Service

I have always been inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. and his views on service. He once said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, “What are you doing for others.” I have tried to live out this philosophy every day of my life.

During my time with New York Cares, I realized just how fortunate my life is. New York Cares is a not-for-profit organization that gets donations from major corporations to distribute to those in need. I was assigned to organize and stock shelves in the Bronx with an assortment of goods such as diapers, clothing, baby formula, school supplies and non-perishables. To see the parents and their children's faces light up at all the items that were there for them, and to see the children run up and down the aisles and choose their favorite backpacks made the hours of working and of being on my feet worth it. This experience helped me solidify my understanding of St. Angela’s teaching of *Serviam* or “to serve”. It made me want to continue my work with helping the less fortunate. Another one of my passions is working within my community at the Youth Cafe. The organizers gave me opportunities to help students from 1st grade up until high school. I volunteer to tutor students and guide them to make productive choices instead of destructive ones.

There is great satisfaction in knowing that I have helped someone. Service to others is like the butterfly effect, where one person can have a profound effect on others. If I can make someone happy or uplift their spirit or give them optimism, then they will share that joy with others. I believe that Martin Luther King Jr. and St. Angela would be proud of the work that I



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have done in an effort to empower the youth and give back to the less fortunate. I am committed to continue this work in the Ursuline community. (Jennipher)



### **Helping in Quarantine**

All students at Ursuline know our motto is *Serviam*— I will serve. We follow the example of Saint Angela Merici by trying to dedicate our lives to serve others. We do all types of service in and out of school. It is not because we have to, but because we want to. Service for me is the chance to help someone else and to inspire other people to be called to service. I can even say it makes me proud of myself. I am proud that I am following the example of Saint Angela and all the Ursuline Alumni that came before me. I am proud that when I have more, I can help someone who has less. The pandemic gave me an opportunity for service that I would never have expected.

Quarantine was terrifying in the beginning. The news didn't give us much hope. "Stay home." "The numbers are climbing." "The hospitals don't have enough beds." "Healthcare workers do not have enough equipment to protect themselves." "Stores are running out of food." It was so frustrating. The media kept saying the same things every day. It felt like nothing would get better. Then Ms. McDermott sent me a video that showed you how to sew your own mask. The video piqued my interest. I love to sew, so I made one right away. I sent her a picture, and she said that I should make them for hospital workers. Finally, I could do something! I would put my talents to good use and really help the people who were fighting the virus every day.

I sewed masks with all the fabric I had, but I could not find a hospital or nursing home to take them. I was so lucky that Ms. McDermott came to the rescue. I was able to work with her on getting the materials I needed every week. She also was able to get my masks out to people who needed them when they were collected at the Ursuline biweekly food drives. I spent months

sewing masks that went out to hospitals, nursing homes, and medical professionals. I sacrificed my time I would take for myself such as playing video games or watching tv to keep making these masks. I even had my mom help me at home to keep pushing out a good number of masks each week. I felt like I had a small team that was willing to work with me. Whether it was getting help collecting the supplies I needed or getting help on sewing the masks, I became like St. Angela to help lead others to help benefit others that need our help. It felt good to know that I could do something in the pandemic that could make a difference. Every mask was a symbol of service to others. Every stack of masks symbolized my hope that God would get us through this horrible time. Seeing the love and support from the comments made me feel so loved and realized that I am doing what I love, helping others.

Having put in so much work I wound up on Ursuline's Instagram account for my masks. Seeing the love and support from the comments made me feel so loved and realized that I am doing what I love. One comment was a girl thanking me because healthcare workers like her mom were struggling to get protective equipment. That really affected me. Helping others to what I strive and continue to do even if there's no pandemic! I believe that God will take care of us, even when we are not sure of what his plan really is. I felt that for the first time I was truly part of that plan. This whole experience has inspired me to find more ways for my talents to serve others and stay true to *Serviam* and the work of Saint Angela. (Millicent)





## **St. Ursula Academy-Cincinnati**

Throughout grade school, I participated in a variety of service projects, but developed a love for service when I tutored younger students before and after school every day. I chose Ursuline for high school because of the community service program. I love that there are so many opportunities, and even more importantly, that a specific amount of service is not required. This may sound odd, but service is more meaningful when it is done by choice.

My freshman year, I founded Helpful Hands Bracelets, where I made friendship bracelets and sold them to my friends and family. I donated the proceeds to the Make-A-Wish Foundation. I chose the Make-A-Wish Foundation because they give children with life-threatening conditions a chance to experience their dreams. I loved how it made such a positive impact in their life. My sophomore year I brought this idea to Ursuline as a Crafts for a Cause day. We donated the bracelets to Warren County Children's Services for their foster care program. I chose this organization because my neighbor was adopted, and I saw all that she went through with foster care and the adoption process. My hope was that the bracelets could somehow help the children through a challenging time by knowing that their friends at Ursuline were thinking about them. As a sophomore, I was also a witness representative for my homeroom and enjoyed sharing my experiences to encourage my classmates to participate in service. I organized gift collections for Canned Food Drive and Christmas Hope. I was also selected to be a Christmas Hope leader my sophomore year and created a video for the assembly about our annual hot chocolate bar fundraiser for Hope Emergency, a non-profit founded by the Ursulines of Brown County, OH.

Because of these experiences, I decided to apply for Ursuline's Community Service Leadership Board (CSLB). I was excited to expand my love for service and share it with the rest of the school in a leadership position. My favorite part of CSLB is motivating others to work

together to make a difference. Individually, the service I do makes an impact on the world, but I know if we all work together, we can make a greater difference. With CSLB, I get to be a part of so many amazing opportunities. I am leading the Fair-Trade Boutique this year and got to help with it my junior year. I also co-led the Lenten Day of service and am planning another day of service in January.

Because of COVID this year, we faced so many challenges, just like the rest of the world. It was hard to have our events as we normally would have and it was a little scary that we would not get as much participation in service. As a result, I designed a Netflix- themed website template for our kick-off assembly. I had a blast putting it together and it was so satisfying to incorporate the videos for the service projects UA offers and watch the final video. The goal was to excite students about all of the incredible opportunities at Ursuline and encourage participation. Usually, we have an assembly, but I really enjoyed having a video and I think many would agree with me!

Another project I have been working on this year is promoting Fair Trade and planning Ursuline's annual Fair-Trade Boutique. One of my goals for Fair Trade is to make it more well-known by educating students about the benefits of buying Fair Trade products. It is eye-opening that by buying Fair Trade a single mother in India can provide for her family because she receives fair wages for her work. Fair Trade is a simple, easy way to give back and make a difference, so I want to share my passion for Fair Trade with others. Every Friday, I post on the UA Community Ministries Instagram an interesting fact about Fair Trade. This includes posts about what Fair Trade is, information about Fair Trade or ethically sourced companies, how Fair Trade empowers women, facts about fast fashion, and so much more. It is rewarding to research new information for these posts because I am able to learn even more and then educate others. Because of COVID, we had to move our annual boutique to be online this year. Usually, the

boutique would be in person in the rotunda with many Fair-Trade companies visiting to sell their products. This year we worked with Ten Thousand Villages to develop a Fair-Trade catalog with videos. The catalog features items that UA students and staff chose and is an easy way for the community to purchase Fair Trade products for Christmas, safely from home. I even got to share my work with the rest of Cincinnati by participating in a news interview. I was so grateful for this opportunity because even more people are now aware of Fair Trade!

All of these opportunities have made me love service even more and I know I want to continue to pursue service throughout my life. I am thankful to have had these experiences as they have allowed me to learn more about myself and others. I have learned more about my faith and God's plan for me. I hope to continue to do service and encourage others to help build my community wherever I go! (Lindsey)



## **Sacred Heart-Louisville**

My faith has called me to serve in three different areas in my community during high school. For three years, I have been a member of the Louisville Youth Philanthropy Council (LYPC), which provides students with hands-on learning in philanthropy and grantmaking to create an appreciation of our community needs and how they can be met. I serve as a Fair-Trade Ambassador through a local fair-trade organization called Just Creations. This opportunity has allowed me to learn about and advocate for social justice and fair-trade principles while volunteering at not-for-profit fair-trade marketplace.

Over the past two summers, I have interned with an environmental nonprofit called Trees Louisville. Originally, I pursued this as a service opportunity with the goal of addressing urban heat island effect caused by the diminishing tree canopy. This unpaid internship taught me that service work can also lead to paid opportunities and professional ways to serve the needs of others. My high school service work has helped me to further discern my vocation as I move towards college.

Through these various service organizations, I have been able to impact my community by making grant decisions through LYPC totaling \$15,000 for nonprofits, by sharing the stories of fair-trade artisans and advocating for ethical consumerism, and by planting trees to mitigate the effects of environmental problems. As I have served my community in hopes of meeting its needs, I have also felt called to inspire other students to become involved with service, specifically, LYPC and the Fair-Trade Ambassador program. For both these programs, I shared my story of service with younger students at my school with the hope that more girls could become involved in these programs. While I hope that my individual acts of service can make a

difference in my community, I know that even bigger goals can be achieved by encouraging others to serve alongside me and making a collective effort towards the changes we hope to see. During my time at Sacred Heart Academy, I have often found myself asking the deeper questions about the roots of the problems my service involves me in addressing. These service opportunities have provided me with meaningful spaces to learn about and discuss the underlying social justice factors that cause these problems, thus giving me the skills needed to make a more effective and tangible impact on my community. Through my service, I have discovered my own passion for environmental justice and human rights advocacy, which has allowed me to confidently speak up about these issues and empower others to join me in meeting the needs of my community. (Anna)



When the Corona Virus first swept the globe in March of 2020, it shut down businesses, schools, and churches. The CDC recommended everyone wear masks that covered people's nose and mouth when engaging in community activities outside of the home. During this time, I worked with my mom to make masks for my family. We researched patterns and used fabric and elastic my mom had in her sewing supplies. I started out with 11 masks and then a few friends and family members requested more. I continued to make masks reaching 50 masks made. This was more than we needed. My mom made a Facebook post to see where we could donate the left-over masks.

The response from people and businesses requesting masks was much more than we anticipated. My mom and I organized orders and I started on a mission to provide masks for as many people as I could. I spent several weeks making masks in the evenings after school and on weekends to keep up with the demand. In all, I spent over 240 hours making over 850 masks. I donated masks to local nursing homes, hospitals, Catholic Charities, our Archdiocesan offices, a few businesses, individuals who needed to continue working with the public or worked with individuals in COVID-19 high risk categories, and family members and friends. I never charged for the masks, although I did have a few people that donated money to cover supplies so I could continue to make and donate masks.

My service helped others to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 and kept people from becoming infected with the virus when they had to go out into the community. In Kentucky, people are required to wear masks to enter grocery stores, attend doctor appointments, go to work, or school, and visit with family. My masks helped many people to do these things which allowed for a return to some semblance of normal living. My parents have always taught my

brother and I it is important to give back. This Ursuline value of service is also reinforced at Sacred Heart Academy. My teachers stress the importance of giving of our time and talents in service to those around us.

This project made a difference for so many throughout the community, enabling them to regain a sense of normalcy and protect people by reducing the spread of the virus. This service is important to me because it helped to bring happiness to those around me and to help build a better community. I was able to support my community amid a global crisis. (Helen)



I have explored my passion for civic engagement throughout my time at Sacred Heart Academy by hosting three voter registration drives. My freshman year, I held a “pledge to register” drive for my classmates. This drive advocated for and educated the Freshman class on the importance of registering to vote. Over half the class pledged to register to vote when they become eligible. Beginning last spring in my Sophomore year and running through the close of the Kentucky voter registration period, I held virtual voter registration drives. The pandemic did not stop me from creating instructional videos and reaching out through partner advocacy organizations. My virtual drives were in partnership with Inspire to Vote, The Civics Center and 18by.vote.

Taking on the responsibility of hosting voter registration drives has given me the opportunity to learn about Kentucky’s voter registration rules, my congressional district and the people who represent my voice at the state and national level, the lasting effects of gerrymandering, government structure and an array of public policy issues. Engaging with Ignite National allowed me to share this information with friends, family member, and fellow Sacred Heart students, thus advocating for participation in the community and creating understanding of the systems at work in the United States which impact peoples’ ability to equitably participate in the daily life of the country.

My participation in voter registration drives has also been critical in motivating and incentivizing potential voters to act on their civic responsibility and bring others to the polls with them. This election year, more than any in the past, my work was urgent and necessary as our country explored the new possibilities for voting such as extended voting periods, consolidated election centers, and mail-in voting as a norm. The events of this year also



brought forward a renewed dedication to eliminate voter suppression.

I became interested in voting and civic engagement by participating in a civic engagement fellowship, the Kentucky Youth Assembly, and the Young Leaders Academy. These programs have helped me to realize the significance of active participation in our government. It is this realization that sparked my passion to ensure that other young people can use their voices to demonstrate what they care about and influence the entire country. Voting is the first step to an America which is representative of its citizenship. Being a passionate advocate for civic engagement has prompted me to seek opportunities to be a participating citizen. My fellowship with 18by.vote and involvement with a variety of different engagement organizations has taught me innovative community organizing techniques. I have been exposed to and utilized advocacy technology and have learned to harness the power of social media to raise awareness of important guidelines and voter updates. Although I am not currently able to vote, my service work has allowed me to influence the actions of those who can, while solidifying my passion for community involvement. I cannot wait for my first vote and will be able to bring many of my peers with me! (Claire)



Throughout the year 2020, I participated in service work with various organizations involving different missions and goals. One of the service organizations I work with is Norton Children's Hospital. I am a member and Secretary of the Teen Board. My main goal is to raise money and awareness for the hospital and families by volunteering my time and resources. I also dedicate my time to an organization called Educational Justice. I act as an educational activist, tutoring and mentoring fifth through eighth grade students who struggle in school. While these organizations are my main service activities I think smaller service projects also make an impact on the community. My smaller projects have included hosting a no-contact shoe drive for WaterStep, a no-contact food and toiletry drive for Paula's Pantry, making animal toys for the Humane Society, and writing cards to residents in nursing homes. As a young woman engaging in service to the community amidst the challenges of a global pandemic, I would describe my service as doing what needs to be done in correlation to the current needs of my community. I follow Gandhi's motto "be the change you wish to see in the world." This idea keeps me accountable and focused on knowing service can create a world that I want to be in. I believe it perfectly captures the definition of service as well as its impact. Being an advocate in the community never goes unnoticed and this is the difference my service makes. I can encourage others and invite my friends and classmates into service by my willingness to participate in various service activities. Service is a chain reaction, only taking one person to start and from there on out, it is a never-ending act.

Service is important in my life because it gives me the chance to make others happy even when I am sometimes experiencing hard times myself. I have found service is truly what you make of it. My lifetime goal is to wake up every day and have the desire and drive to support others. Service

has not only played an essential role in my life but also the people I have worked with, served with, and the ones I have made smile. This is why I serve: service is a two-way gift, changing one life at a time but also gaining a new perspective from the life you just changed. It has taught me the value of a positive outlook and hope in humanity. Service has taught me this lesson in the sense of when one thinks nothing can change their current situation(s), there is always at least one person willing to provide the opportunity for a better existence. It has been very important to me to seek ways to continue to serve my community throughout the pandemic and as I continue to engage in school completely on-line. ((Grace))





I developed a four-year relationship with a non-profit organization, Dogs Helping Heroes. Dogs Helping Heroes provides service dogs to veterans, first responders and Gold Star family members who have physical or mental impairments. During this time, I organized ten different fundraisers which provided \$25,000 to adopt and train four service dogs. These dogs are now in service to our nation's heroes who live in Kentucky and Indiana.

While working with Dogs Helping Heroes, I have seen first-hand the positive effects the service dogs have on their heroes. Many heroes suffer from suicidal thoughts, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, depression, and mobility issues following their service to country and community. Dogs Helping Heroes provides service dogs which make it possible for heroes to regain pieces of their lives back. In fact, seeing the change in the heroes' life inspired me to create a mini documentary for my 10<sup>th</sup> grade International Baccalaureate Personal Project. I interviewed an ex-EMT/current 9-1-1 call operator before, during, and after he completed his service dog training with Dogs Helping Heroes. He suffered from PTSD, depression, and anxiety, which impaired his life and eventually discouraged him from participating in many everyday activities. He told me about his slow withdraw from social events, crowded places, and most importantly, from his own family. This all changed when he received his service dog, Marvin. Marvin stabilized the EMT's mental health, helped him to return to a routine life, and enabled him to be more present to his daughter and son. He explained that Marvin "saved his life," and that he might not have been alive without the help and support that he received from Dogs Helping Heroes.

I became involved with Dogs Helping Heroes my eighth-grade year while in the process of

running for the Kentucky Youth Assembly Presiding Officer position. I needed to choose an organization to support on my “campaign.” In the process of finding an organization, I reflected upon my love for animals and my deep respect for our nation’s heroes. When I found Dogs Helping Heroes, I knew it was the perfect organization for me. My father is a veteran and ingrained in me an upmost respect for those who have served, therefore, my fundraising efforts give me an opportunity to show my support for the brave men and women who keep our country and cities safe. My advocacy work raises awareness of the detrimental effects service to country and community can have on individuals (i.e., PTSD). It has been important to bring awareness of the work accomplished by Dogs Helping Heroes to Sacred Heart. By hosting bake sales and introducing my fellow Valkyries to program participants my peers are better able to understand the need for providing service dogs to our heroes. I have also been able to encourage and mentor my classmates on getting involved in the community with issues they are passionate about. I am blessed and beyond grateful for the opportunities that have arisen from my service to Dogs Helping Heroes, and never thought that when I started fundraising for the organization in eighth grade, it would become my strongest passion and biggest achievement. (Reese)



At the peak of the Corona Virus quarantine in March, I lost my uncle, who was my best friend, to drug-related causes. It was an especially devastating loss because there were no distractions to escape my thoughts, such as going shopping or to a friend's house to clear my mind. It was at this moment I turned to my passion and mental escape, design, and fashion. I have loved to sew and create from a young age, and it has served me as a creative outlet for years. I felt that I needed to use my passion to memorialize my uncle somehow and turn the pain that I was feeling into something beautiful. He was always a huge proponent and supporter of my artistic endeavors, so I wanted to do something to make him proud. I combined my passion for sewing, design, sustainability, and business to create a small, reworked vintage clothing brand, Bad Trip Clothing. I gathered pre-owned sustainably sourced clothing then revamped it to create something new and unique! I made several business choices in honor of my uncle's memory, such as my logo, which is modeled after one of his sculptures of an eye. I felt this sculpture was fitting because, in many cultures, eyes represent awareness. Through my brand, I hope to raise awareness and a monetary donation to support those battling drug addiction. I am doing this by donating 10% of proceeds from my clothing line to The Healing Place, a nonprofit based in Louisville, KY that provides free and quality rehabilitation to any person struggling with substance. My first launch of 14 original clothing pieces has almost sold out and I have a new launch projected for mid-December!

My service makes a difference because the donations I make to The Healing Place help provide comprehensive rehabilitation services to those struggling with addiction. It is an amazing organization that goes above and beyond in its care. I chose to support this organization at the peak of the pandemic because although the Coronavirus has practically shut down the world,

addiction never sleeps. This quarantine has been detrimental to many people's mental health and addiction rates rise by the day, so I decided that putting funds towards The Healing Place's operations was the best way to serve the needs of people who struggle with addiction most immediately in a time where in-person volunteering is not allowed. In terms of impact on my community, I have had people tell me that by starting my brand and putting my art on a very public platform, I have inspired others to begin creating and thinking of ways they could also start a business of their own one day. Nothing makes me happier than to inspire others to pursue their goals, despite of all the nay-sayers who may tell them differently! I also hope that I have encouraged some of the girls who have struggled to find fulfilling service opportunities to go out and create their own service opportunities! In fact, several of the models for Bad Trip Clothing are my friends and Sacred Heart classmates. Although I have faced criticism, I have also been rewarded with positive encouragement that I am making a difference in the lives of my peers as well as people who are struggling with addiction alike.

My service fulfills my wishes to help those struggling with addiction and provides me with an outlet to express my creativity, emotions, and passions on every level! I feel so blessed to have the opportunity to do what I love while simultaneously helping others. Creating this project has helped me grieve and heal after the death of my beloved uncle. Through my brand, I have been pushed out of my comfort zone in quite literally every aspect of my life. I have learned so much, ranging from new sewing, embroidery, and screen-printing techniques to business and marketing skills. Succeeding in starting my business has helped me prove to myself that I am capable of making my dreams of serving others through art come to fruition! (Haylen)



This past summer, I applied for the opportunity to volunteer at Camp Hi Ho. Although, I was a year younger than the volunteer requirement I was able to apply because I had attended Hi Ho as a camper. Each week this summer, I assisted campers and counselors as they participated in arts and crafts, worked with the resident farm animals, interacted in the pet barn, received snacks and I built relationships with junior campers. I always jumped in to help camp leadership with carpool, serving lunch and other camp tasks as needed. Camp was very different this year due to COVID-19 restrictions and I was excited to be able to pitch in to keep the tradition of Camp Hi Ho going!

Camp Hi Ho's motto is "to make kids happy." It provides a place and activities to give campers an opportunity to get out of the house and have fun. Every day I did my best to ensure campers had the most fun possible and be happy. I spent a lot of time working at the arts and crafts station. This gave me the ability to do crafts with the campers, help them, and bond with them. I loved to make kids laugh by telling them jokes, or even by telling them funny stories. Working at Camp HiHo is a win-win situation because I can make the kids happy, while they make me happy, because after all, camp is the happiest place on earth, whether you are a camper or staff member. This year, it was so important to give the campers an opportunity to just have fun and be kids in the middle of this pandemic. We had all been kept inside and quarantined from friends and family for a few months, due COVID-19. Camp HiHo was committed to being open this summer while creating a safe and healthy space for kids to have fun and heal from the impacts of the Spring quarantine.

As a teen, I am called to find ways to serve the community. I responded to this call to serve with my passion to make people happy. On the first day of camp, I was not sure how I was going to

do. I was somewhat introverted and shy. I did not know where my place would be because this was my first year as a volunteer instead of being a camper. By the end of camp, I was able to describe myself as an extrovert. This opportunity to help children to have fun and be happy impacted me and the community. I learned as much from the campers as they did from me. A particular camper was a great witness to personal faith and closeness to God during a time where I did not feel particularly close to God. We spent a lot of time during camp talking about ways to build a relationship with God which encourage me to strive daily to be closer to God. A closeness which calls me and encourages me to continue my acts of service. (Lexis)





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## **Ursuline Academy-Wilmington**

St Angela tells us to “strive to be faithful to that which God has called you”. In my opinion, God calls us to do his will in a myriad of ways. For me, this happened when I was ten years old, a quiet student in the back of my fifth-grade class. I had a quick check up appointment with a dermatologist at A.I DuPont Children’s Hospital towards the end of November 2015. After the appointment, my mother and I were walking back to the car and passed through the hospital lobby. In passing through, I was taken back by the sight of a Christmas tree and a nativity scene. Joyous memories of past Christmases at home with my family flooded my mind, and I suddenly realized that many of these hospitalized children would not get to experience the same Christmas that I would that year. Being possibly the most festive person on the planet, this is where my mission began.

The same day I arrived back in my classroom and insisted that my teacher help me make flyers to pass around the school. Together, we got approval from the principal and instructed all the classes to make handmade holiday cards for the children I saw at DuPont. This was now five years ago, but I will never forget my 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Roberto, and the incredible passion and effort she put towards my project. Since that day, my best friend and I have collected approximately 10,000 cards in 5 years. We deliver to thirteen different hospitals and facilities throughout the tri-state area. In addition to our elementary school, we now receive cards from many local school districts, drop-boxes in our hometown, and Ursuline students. Our project is featured annually in the New Town Press, a South Jersey newspaper, and our collection grows bigger every year. With the current situation of the pandemic, our undertaking is looking a little different this year, but one thing remains the same and that is the faithfulness to our mission - a

mission which God calls us towards, and which we will not give up on in an effort to bring smiles to less fortunate children at Christmas time. (Audrey)





I was shocked to learn that in the state of Delaware alone, there are over 100,000 people that experience food insecurity. Over the summer, I decided to reach out to a charity my family has had the privilege of working with called the Emmanuel Dining Room (EDR) that is run by the Ministry of Caring, a Catholic organization in Wilmington. After talking with them and getting an understanding of their needs, we developed a plan to try and serve one meal every month with the generous help of our Ursuline community. A meal typically looks like 16 pans of casseroles, over 15 dozen cookies, and six extra-large cans of green beans. After it is collected it is dropped off at 9 am to a staff from EDR who could not be more kind and thankful. This project has opened my eyes to the way a single meal can impact someone so greatly. Serving the community, just as St. Angela did, has become one of my favorite times of the month that allows me to remember how fortunate I am that a meal is always on my table and to be aware that others do not have that same luxury. (Meg)



Volunteering is a passion for me. If I am not helping, I am not happy. One of the organizations I volunteered at was Faces N Crisis. This is a non-profit organization that helps women and children with transitional housing, free items and clothing throughout the City of Wilmington. One day, I met with other volunteers and members of the Faces N Crisis organization to set up an event. This event was held in the city where the poverty rate is high. Prior to the start of the event, many men and women with children were lined up to listen to Christian music, eat snacks, receive sanitary items and clothing. Once the event started, people selected clothing, shoes and items. Then the people asked how much it would cost. Once we said it was free, they were able to take even more. I was placed behind the children's clothing table. A woman and her daughter came to my table, the woman asked her daughter what she would like, and her daughter said, "Nothing". I believe she did not want her mother to pay for anything. Her mother told her daughter to look at me and said, "She is giving out the clothing for you to wear so you can look beautiful." The little girl asked me which outfit she should pick. I helped her look for her outfit and as soon as she found it, she thanked and gave me a hug. Her mom also thanked me. I responded, "God bless you." As I watched everyone gather stuff off of the table, as well as food for themselves and their children, it made me feel good giving back to the community and I felt that I was making a difference.

Growing up in an Ursuline community, St. Angela has been a big role model in my life. I wanted to live up to how she served. She gave back so much; she made an impact on the world that encouraged and pushed me to do the same. I will continue to live through the motto "I will serve." (Samiah)



## **Ursuline Academy-Dedham**

Finding a cure for cancer has always been a cause close to my heart due to the numerous battles and losses of many of my friends and family members. To raise money for cancer research, my two friends and I painted hearts on pallets and sold them, with all of the profits going to the Jimmy Fund. During the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, many people put hearts outside of their homes as a sign of hope in regards to healthcare workers. This inspired us to use the hope symbol in another way, as hope for curing cancer. Furthermore, with the Coronavirus, we were looking for something beneficial to do with all of our free time but little did we know, it would take up all of our hours over the span of two months. We spent a lot of our days building the pallets for long hours in the sweltering summer heat. Additionally, much of our time was spent begging store owners and digging through trash to find good pallets to work on. We teamed up with the Jimmy Fund team, “Team Tara”, who has raised over one million dollars for cancer research in the last 6 years. We asked the Team Tara captains to help us advertise “Spread the Love Pallets” by posting about it on their Facebook pages, and we were immediately flooded with orders.

We were lucky enough to be asked to give a speech at a Team Tara zoom meeting, where we spoke about our project, goals, and gave thanks to the many people who helped us along this journey. We were ecstatic to see that we were even put in our local newspaper, which I can only hope inspired others to take initiative within their community. We were all recognized as pacesetters, which is “an elite group of top fundraisers” ([danafarber.jimmyfund.org](http://danafarber.jimmyfund.org)). All together, we built about 85 pallets and raised over 3,000 dollars. Although the suggested donation for a pallet was only 30 dollars, many people paid much more since they were so

passionate about the cause. Additionally, we gave a pallet to Dr. Kimmie Ng, whose research was funded by this year's Jimmy Fund Walk. Of course, it was only right to give her a pallet since this project was meant to support the same cause which she has devoted her life and career to.

During this project, not only did I learn how to use power tools and run a short term small business (consistent with spreadsheets, new websites, and utilizing venmo), but I also learned the impact that I can have on others. Many of our neighbors insisted on helping us, whether that was teaching us how to use certain tools or even assist in spreading the word. I am glad to say that our project gave some of our older neighbors something meaningful to do, which is especially important during this depressing time. As much as all their critiques and assistance helped us, I genuinely believe that it brightened their day to be able to safely see other people as well as help us construct pallets. Although our main goal was to raise money for cancer patients and research, we were blessed enough to give hope to our customers and others observing our project. Whenever someone collected their heart pallet, they would often praise us and even tell us their experiences with cancer. Hearing other people's stories was definitely a reward within itself, since somebody else's life can teach you more lessons than you can ever learn in a textbook.

If you ever get a chance to visit Canton Massachusetts, I ask that you look at all the hearts outside of people's homes. Even now with the holiday season approaching, people are putting lights on their heart pallets to keep the hope alive, which shows that our summer project is still impacting others. So many of our neighbors supported us, leading to nearly every single house on our street having a heart pallet. I loved hearing our neighbors say how much they love walking around the neighborhood and seeing all the hearts. Truly, as much as this project has

helped the Jimmy Fund, it has also brought my community closer together. For that reason, I know that all the effort and hours that we put into Spread the Love Pallets was worth it because this selfless mission was the best way that I could have spent my summer break. (Tara)



Before COVID, the last Tuesday of every month was a special day. My mom and I would drive to a homeless shelter in Brockton, Massachusetts where we would find children anxiously waiting at the door for our arrival. The children in the shelter knew that no matter what had changed in their lives during that month, they could count on one thing: a birthday party. As part of the non-profit organization Birthday Wishes, I helped to throw celebrations for children in the shelter who had a birthday that month. Everyone in the shelter, not just the children, look forward to these parties. I would walk in and my smile widened when I would see a familiar face run up to me. The first few times I volunteered I noticed that the children quickly realized who I was and remembered me every time. It hit me that the birthday parties were a constant in the lives of these children and that I am part of this constant. When we think about serving those who are less fortunate than us, we often try to supply them with materials that are necessary for survival. While these goods are greatly important, I feel that the social and emotional health of those living in poverty can be neglected. The ability to provide a source of happiness for the children in the shelter through a simple birthday party has made me realize how important it is to be there for those who rely on us, especially when they are most vulnerable. That's why when COVID cases started rising, my heart dropped when I found out that I would no longer be able to volunteer at in person parties. I was devastated as I realized that a huge source of happiness for the children would be taken away.

One of the ways that Birthday Wishes is able to run is due to the generous donations from fundraisers and toy drives, many of which are run by schools. With schools being shut down, Birthday Wishes started to run short of the supplies that they needed. To provide for the families in the shelter, Birthday Wishes had begun giving "birthday boxes" to all of the homes, which

gave the shelters the materials they needed to throw a birthday party. With supplies running low, the need for fundraising was ever so important to the organization.

I had caught myself feeling down a few times during the pandemic, as it was easy to complain about what I could not do. I realized, however, that I needed to switch my mindset to what I could do. With extra time on my hands that came with being in quarantine, I began to offer my friends and family custom sweatpants and sweatshirts that I would design. At first, this idea was something that I never expected to have such a big impact as it ended up having. Finding ways to customize the clothes took many trials. Once I started getting a process down, I was able to make different clothes with stars, lightning bolts, or even school names on them. The support I received was huge, and I made an Instagram advertising my clothing. What started as a simple quarantine project to try and fundraise for Birthday Wishes turned into a company that I still run and am donating the profits from to Birthday Wishes so that they can continue to give birthday boxes to the shelters.

As I begin my next chapter in college next year, I am confident that I will continue my service efforts wherever I go. Ursuline has truly instilled in me the importance of service. I have learned that even in the times that it seems like nothing can be done to help, all it takes is creativity, determination, and resilience to make a difference. (Caroline)



## Saint Ursula Villa

I have always loved animals, particularly cats. My family and I became aware of Ohio Alleycat Resource (OAR) several years ago, as the agency helped when one of our elderly cats went missing. I was drawn to the mission of OAR, as the agency tries to enrich the lives of cats and communities in Cincinnati by providing low-cost, high-quality spay/neuter services for pets, ferals, and strays. As part of this, they run a no-kill adoption center dedicated to finding loving homes for cats.

Given my connection with OAR's mission, I told my mom that I wanted to volunteer there. When she spoke with them, they initially said I was too young, but they later agreed to let me volunteer if my mom came with me. We began volunteering at OAR in September of 2019, providing care to the cats awaiting adoption and foster homes on a weekly basis. Many of the cats are "rough around the edges," meaning that they have medical problems, illness, or disabilities that would have led them to be turned away by other shelters. My volunteer work at OAR has allowed me to clean the rooms and cages of the various cats, while also feeding them and providing them with socialization. I have **learned** that the role of socialization is important because it helps the cats adjust and prepare for adoption.

The value and importance of service has been a key part of my education, as I have attended a Catholic school in the Ursuline tradition since I was three years old. Given my love of animals, I was drawn to service at OAR. During my time there, I have learned increased responsibility and compassion toward living things. Helping at this shelter has allowed me to touch the lives of many cats that otherwise would have been euthanized.



Through my service to others, I have learned more about myself. It has helped me consider my long-term goals, while appreciating the need to include service in those goals. Volunteering at OAR has shown me how important service is to the people and animals impacted by OAR, as well as myself. Without OAR, there would not be as many options for cats in the community, and I believe that many of the cats that I have come to love at OAR would have been euthanized. I am truly thankful to be able to volunteer at this shelter. (Sophie)





## **Ursuline Academy-New Orleans**

“Serviam” is Latin for “I will serve.” This is Ursuline’s motto throughout the world, a motto that encourages students to serve others outside of their comfort zone and into unfamiliar communities. Each year, students are required to have 25 hours of community service, but when I entered the 9th grade, I felt compelled to go above and beyond this requirement. As an altar server for my church since the fourth grade, I was not unfamiliar with giving back to the community. I set a goal for myself to obtain 100 service hours per year. Furthermore, I wanted to participate more in my Ursuline community by joining clubs and sports. I knew balancing all of these activities would not be easy, however, I was motivated and determined to use my talents and skills to help others to the best of my ability.

Ursuline Academy’s method of community service has taught me the joy and importance of giving back. Each year, our population focus changes in agreement and in accordance with the teachings of St. Angela Merici. In 8th grade, you serve the elderly. In 9th, you assist with the education of children. In 10th grade, our focus was children with disabilities. In 11th grade, we served the homeless, and in 12th grade, we are serving the environment. Throughout these years, I also continued my duties as altar server to my church. By serving others, I was able to grow as a person and improve my own happiness in life. Serving others has also taught me to adapt to new and unfamiliar circumstances and find a way to use my strengths to get comfortable in any situation. Initially, I was very intimidated to get out and serve those I did not know by myself. Despite this intimidation, my experience has been positive, and I have learned some valuable

lessons along the way. I learned that no matter your age, or disability, or life circumstance we are all children of God. Furthermore, I was able to gain a new admiration and respect for Educators and teachers, and a new appreciation for the many blessings I have been bestowed. I see that I need to give back to the environment so that future generations can enjoy this planet as I have. I also live out the teachings of St. Angela Merici through my own school activities inside and outside of campus. From something as small as sending a kind smile and greeting to my peers and teachers, to participating in the national March for Life walk, placing other's happiness above my own has become quite the norm. When I was an ambassador for my school, new students' priorities were quickly placed above my own. It was my job to make sure that they were comfortable in their new environment. As a nominated CIA leader (Community in Action), I rally my classmates to participate in different activities that we host, as well as relay information from administration to the students and vice versa. I act as a voice for my peers, as well as take the steps necessary as a leader to find a solution when problems arise. As an experienced sailing and soccer player, it is my job to act as a role model for my underclassmen and teammates. Their improvement is a reflection of my mentorship, and I value their growth as my own. In the National Art Honor Society, we do many different service activities. Recently, we made bracelets over Thanksgiving break for Grace House, a residential substance-use disorder treatment program.

Throughout my high school career, I strive to incorporate the teachings of St. Angela Merici in all of my actions. If not for her example, I would not be who I am today - a strong leader and someone who has a passion for helping others in need. As a soon-to-be Ursuline graduate, it is my job and calling to continue this tradition of service. (Cassidy)



Service. To many people “service” is just a word, but as an Ursuline girl “service” has become so much more important to me with an even deeper meaning. St. Angela taught through her actions how much helping those around you help both other people and yourself. Throughout my five years as an Ursuline girl, I have had the amazing opportunity to try service in so many different aspects of my community. I’ve worked with the elderly, children, special needs, the homeless, and the environment. Each one of these areas has made me realize how much service impacts people of all different ages and backgrounds. While all these service sites were enjoyable, my favorite by far was working with the homeless and hungry. Going into this service site, I was extremely worried if I could handle it. I tend to have this preconceived notion that homeless people are bad people, who are just looking for money for drugs or other unnecessary objects. However, after getting to know a few homeless people and hear their stories, my thoughts changed for the better. These homeless people are really trying their best to stay alive, and it is our job to help them as much as we can. An experience that I will never forget from working with homeless people is the joy that came from them when we got the opportunity to give them care packages full of snacks, hand sanitizer, tissues, and other goodies. It’s really the small things that make a huge difference in these people’s lives, and I wouldn’t change that experience for the world. St. Angela taught that service is about stepping out of your comfort zone to help those in need, and I was able to do just that in this experience. St. Angela made her Ursuline order to show her love of helping others, and when I do service, I feel that deep connection with St. Angela.

Doing service has also encouraged me to make connections with other Ursuline girls and people from around the country. I’ve learned that teamwork plays a big role in service. This year my

focus area is with the environment, and two of my friends and I went together to pick up trash in our community. This was definitely not something I could have done myself. We were able to fill so many bags of trash because we were working together to reach the goal of making the environment better. My love for service also gave me the opportunity to go to West Virginia for a week and serve those in the community around the farm. I met people from all around the country and we worked together to help the less fortunate people in the area. This service experience was one that can never be forgotten and has opened my eyes to a different side of service. It was definitely out of my comfort zone but has made me grow so much as a person. Service has truly made me the person I am today. Without the amazing opportunities I have had to work with so many different people in my community, I feel that I wouldn't be as educated as I am about my community. Thanks to Ursuline and *Serviam*, my life and outlook on life has been changed for the better! (Olivia)



## **Ursuline Academy-Cincinnati**

I am grateful to be the student leader of Big Surprises and co-leader of the St. Vincent de Paul group of the Student Outreach Services organization (SOS). Big Surprises coordinates one time service opportunities available for any Saint Ursula student to simply sign up for and serve. My role as the Big Surprises leader is to spread the word about service events, answer any questions people may have, and serve my community in each event. We have volunteered for Habitat for Humanity's Rock the Block at Oyler School, at Hope Emergency Program helping prepare for their holiday event, and have future volunteer events planned. Through SOS, I co-lead a group of girls in making monthly food deliveries from St. Vincent de Paul to our neighbors in need. In addition to that, we participated in their Halloween Trunk-or-Treat for children who don't have safe trick-or-treating neighborhoods, and we arranged a toy drive for donations to their annual Christmas event. I am fortunate to be able to get a great education and have all the resources I need, so I feel it is important for me to give back to my community and help those who have less than me. Also, service gives me a feeling of purpose and gratification. Finally, during Covid I feel called to support those who are struggling or in a vulnerable place because no one deserves to be alone or suffering. (Natalie)



Service plays a big part in my life and is something that I strive to commit to whenever the opportunity arises. Through the Bulldog Buddies tutoring program, I have had the opportunity to connect with students in grade schools in the Cincinnati area and am able to help tutor them with their schoolwork each week. This opportunity has shown me the difference I can make in these students' day to day lives. Service gives me the ability to give back to my community and make an impact in any way that I can. Especially during these unprecedented and challenging times, I see it as more important than ever to be of service to people in need so that they are able to continue on with their lives through support from their community. (Clare)



As a woman that is lucky enough to be educated about the many injustices, not only around the world but in our very own community, it is hard to keep quiet. I am aware that I live a comfortable life compared to a lot of people and I believe that I should use my energy to lift others up. A strong sense of empathy and compassion is what drives me to help others. When I support People Working Cooperatively, I see the homes that we fix up as a place that family memories are made. When I tutor children at St. Francis de Sales, I see a room full of future thinkers, Leaders, nurturers, and prophets. When I use my voice to bring awareness to a community, I see change happen. I understand that I have the power to make this world a better place and strive to use these gifts in everything that I do. The most rewarding part of the work is seeing the effect that it has on lives close to me. Seeing girls' faces light up when I walk into the Roll Hill Community Center, the students that I tutor trusting me with their secrets, and friends thanking me for speaking up for them because they do not have a voice makes it all worth it. These small honors for doing something that I genuinely enjoy are what keep me going. (Hollee)





For my service work one of my close friends and I have felt a need to educate people on the dangers of human trafficking. Living in Cincinnati, I have heard a lot of how present human trafficking is in my area with specifically the highway loop that goes all around our city. This topic is really important to me too, because I feel that as a teenage girl growing up and going into college, it's really important to stay aware of the dangers roaming the streets that we may not even know are there. I first got involved when a speaker from Woman of Alabaster came in and talked about the signs of human trafficking and how it can affect anyone no matter their social status, gender, age, or income. Last year, we had begun what we wanted to do to help educate our Saint Ursula community by bringing in a speaker to speak during one of our lunches to show how this epidemic affects everyone. Unfortunately, though, we had to do it over Google Meet and present the topic ourselves, but overall, I would say it was still a success! This year though we are now in the works to keep advocating and have a couple more things to show our continued support. We plan to have a new speaker come in during each grade's break time to help further educate the dangers, write letters to local representatives to help navigate them into passing more legislation, and host a schoolwide event where people can donate money to local human trafficking organizations. I'm really excited to see what these new things will lead us to and how making more people aware changes the way people see the outside world. (Abi)



## **Mount Merici Academy**

Service work has always been very close to my heart and important in my everyday life skills. It affects my social skills, kindness, and my ability to work and care for others. It opens your heart and gives you a warm feeling. I was excited when I heard about the service work hours that we have to do this year, and I already knew what I wanted to do. I decided to do little things to make people in my community and family smile. For example, every month I go to my grandmother's and help her do chores and little outdoor projects, like doing the siding on her house, yard work, and building shelves. Some of the other work that I do includes things like delivering food boxes to my neighbors and helping my mom sell things online. I chose to do this work because it helps the people I love and care about and I love seeing the smile I put on their faces whenever I help them. (Katherine)



## **Ursuline Academy-Dallas**

For my Girl Scout Gold Award project, I worked with a low-resource elementary school in West Dallas called St. Mary of Carmel. Since St. Mary's budget could no longer support a librarian, their library had lapsed into disuse. I aimed to design a system for the library to be operated by the classroom teachers, thus alleviating the financial burden of a librarian, while also reviving it and making it a center of community again.

I started by cleaning out the library and replacing old books. Then I spent some time designing quick and easy processes for classroom teachers to maintain the library, since all the responsibilities of a librarian would fall to the teachers. When I had created these procedures, I documented them in a librarian's manual and filmed a training video for the teachers explaining how to do them. I created member accounts for all the students, and I made them each a special library card to use when checking out books. Finally, after making the manual, video, and library cards, there was one more thing I had to do: catalog all the books in the library.

Cataloging a book meant putting a barcode, a spine label, and some special book tape on the cover, typing the book's information into the online catalog, and scanning the barcode. Logging just 10 books took over 15 minutes. I knew I couldn't process the whole collection alone, so I recruited volunteers from my cross-country team, my school, and from other Scout troops to help me tackle it. My team worked through countless setbacks, including the pandemic, but by the end of my project, we had logged over 1,000 books.

My whole project took 220 hours of work. Besides making the library available again to the St. Mary community, my project also impacted me personally: I got better at dealing with setbacks, and I gained stronger leadership skills. It also showed me that I have the power to make

a difference in the world, to find innovative solutions to problems, and to create positive change in my community. Finally, it showed me the power and meaning of Serviam as a lived reality.

(Anna)



### Little by Little: How Serving Leads me to Understanding

Just above my desk sits a sign—bold and brave in its letters.

#### *SERVE THY NEIGHBOR*

As it stares back at me, peeking over the top of my computer screen, I'm reminded of a project dear to my heart. Financial Literacy for American Families, or FLAF, for short, is a program I created my sophomore year to provide lesson plans for underprivileged families and individuals. The content of these lesson plans encapsulates information in a way that's easy to understand for a variety of age groups, and uses curriculum gathered on the biggest issues faced by underprivileged communities. Excavating databases, interviewing activists, and contacting professors are ways that I've gained information for FLAF, but these investments are beyond just a time commitment. Although FLAF has provided an opportunity for those in need of these resources, the program has also led me to a new understanding of service.

I used to believe that service was about volunteering, or that if I was participating in my community, I was serving my neighbors—but by educating myself on the issues pertaining to these groups, I came to the realization that service is about understanding your community.

For every bit of information gained for the program, I'm able to study some of the most rudimentary issues that underlie the U.S. and the people that makeup our country, such as how to cope with recession or how to make the most out of minimum wage. As I continue to build FLAF, I begin to understand what contributions I can make to solving financial inequality—even if it's only little by little.

Now, I say that I serve because I want to better understand the lives of others. Service, in the end, is more than just an action, and I know I'm living up to the words just above my

head, striving to *SERVE THY NEIGHBOR*. (Marissa)



As a private school student, I felt I was inside a bubble: that is, an economically advantaged bubble. I wanted to burst this bubble and confront real world issues that privilege may have shielded me from. The STAIRS Program, a non-profit organization which enlists high schoolers to tutor low-income youth and prepare them for a college-preparatory high school environment, was the perfect way for me to do so. As an intern at the program, I spend quality time researching activities that will be enjoyable for all ages; activities which will start conversations and help the mentors and students get to know each other better. I also help plan out these activities, whether that be buying and setting up certain materials, or even just planning how the other intern and I are going to explain the activity. Scattergories, Halloween Mad Libs, and field day are examples of activities we planned and executed. I also communicate with mentors to send out key information, reminders, and important surveys that must be filled out.

I call organizations, such as an arcade or a bowling rink, to schedule outside activities for our program. I have to discuss finances and group size with an employee and help research and decide on a party plan that will best fit our program. Finally, I help solve problems and propose changes for the program. The other intern and I set up a meeting with the Program Coordinator, Ms. Merani. She takes in our ideas and helps us execute them in a reasonable way. For example, since we often had mentors missing during sessions, we hired dedicated mentors to help keep them responsible and give them a comfortable space to talk to another mentor, someone not involved in administration, if they were having issues. As an intern, I helped recruit thirty-one mentors this year to tutor and mentor our middle school students. I emailed high schools and asked them to inform their students of the opportunity, and helped put up fliers within the schools.

Working as an intern for STAIRS has allowed me to step into the real world, outside of my sheltered private school, confront real world problems, and actively play a part in solving them. During my time as an intern I was awarded The President's Volunteer Service Award for obtaining 103+ service hours. As an intern, I have learned how to realistically implement changes and improvements. I also learned how to effectively communicate with others in a professional way, both in person and through email. I have learned how to communicate and collaborate in the real world as well when planning outside activities. I have also gained an appreciation for non-profit workers. Working "behind the scenes" as an intern, I learned how complex the problems non-profits face are. These problems are often not easily fixable, and you have to learn to work with the resources you have. Because of this experience, I will always value my education and the privilege I have lived with to obtain it. When you see the students go off to these college-preparatory high schools, you feel a sense of pride in knowing that you helped them get there, and that you helped, in a small, but important way, to bridge the gap that privilege builds. (Claire)





I am actively involved with Feed My Starving Children, a monthly volunteer at The Missionaries of Charity, a basketball coach, elementary school volunteer, missionary, and more. I have won the Presidential Service, St. Anselm College, and Ursuline Education Network awards in my (almost) four years of high school. These awards reflect my community involvement and service. But, what these accolades do not recognize is why I spend time serving. Ursuline Academy's motto is *Serviam* or "I will serve." Although we have a service requirement for each semester, I always go beyond that. **Why?** Because in living through that motto, I have found a greater sense of fulfillment that has pulled me through my Ursuline career and will only continue as I enter the next chapter of my life. As I serve the community, they help me.

In Costa Rica, the people's unwavering hospitality and simplistic lifestyle showed me that you don't need a hot shower or phone to be happy. Life is best unplugged and surrounded by community. When I serve the Missionaries of Charity with my grandfather, the kids' smiles and giggles as they are pushed on the swings motivate me to find meaningful service projects in Oklahoma. While playing in every player on the bench, winning the basketball championship helped me realize that amazing teamwork is better than ball-handling skills and talent. I choose to participate in these activities because helping and volunteering is a cyclical process that benefits both the giver and the receiver. I learn so much from the people I serve and serve with. Ursuline has opened many doors for me, but the most important door was one that created me to be a steward of the world and a global leader. (Juliana)



At first glance, the year of 2020 seems to be the riptide of suffering due to COVID-19. When summer break began back in June, I had set my eyes on a veterinary internship, local volunteer work, and quality time with loved ones. Unfortunately, the pandemic's waves swept my plans from the shores of reality. While searching for new opportunities, I stumbled upon a service project managed by the SEAS Outreach Ministry, an organization at my parish. I eagerly embraced this new opportunity, which consisted of packing food boxes for the homeless and for the families in need. I realized, however, that while food satisfied empty stomachs, it could not completely fill the void in people's morale during these trying times. Thus, *Food for Thought* was born.

Organized by my sister Jillian and me, this project provides handwritten notes to be placed inside the food boxes. We hope to boost people's spirits with inspirational saint quotes and Bible verses written in stunning calligraphy or ebullient block letters, embellished with love and the spirit of *Serviam*. Understanding that safe volunteer work is currently limited, Jillian and I have extended *Food for Thought* to students at our respective schools, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School and Ursuline Academy of Dallas. Started in August, our project offers simple remote service opportunities, and we have since collected almost 600 cards to give to the needy and the homeless.

*Food for Thought* has instilled within me the values of responsibility, simplicity, and gratitude. Before launching the project, I learned to work with faculty members and developed flyers and proposals on my own. This project has reinforced my belief that we can meaningfully impact our community through small deeds; a single handwritten card can bring immense joy to

its recipient. This project also highlights my blessings: despite my own hardships, I have food and shelter unlike some of the people who receive the food boxes and the cards. I faced disappointment earlier in the summer, but this project constitutes the treasure that I unearthed after the pandemic had drowned my initial plans. Through *Food for Thought*, I have realized that no matter the strength of the waves which threaten to overturn our world, there is always treasure right beneath our toes. (Jamie)



### **Academy of Mount St. Ursula**

Living out AMSU's motto of *Serviam* has become a huge part of my life. For the past four years, I have done many different things when it came to service. I have happily participated in school events, helped children in my elementary school, and helped in a nursing home. However, I am most proud of living out the practice of social justice. COVID-19 has hit hard in many communities, but very strongly in hospitals and nursing homes. While virtually learning from home, I have written letters to those on the frontlines, including doctor and nurses. I thanked them for all they have done and continue to do for the benefit of others. I let them know that they were not alone in this battle, and I was cheering them on. I have also written to an elderly person who was stuck in the nursing home because of the pandemic. That person was not allowed to see family, and I felt that it was only right to let this person know that someone, a stranger does care. Writing to these people made my heart warm, and I knew that all I wanted back was a smile on their face. The gratifying outcome of these activities was when the recipients write back to express their appreciation. One such recipient was an alumna of the Academy of Mount St. Ursula, Dr. Mary Badillo who is an emergency doctor in one of our hospitals who not only wrote back to all of us who wrote her about her frontline sacrifices during the pandemic but who also mentioned us when she gave an interview to a television crew—thanking us, the students of her alma mater for supporting their efforts.

Continuing my social justice journey, I have also joined a webinar where many presenters spoke about the climate crisis and injustices faced in our country. I was inspired by their words and the presentation they showed. It opened my eyes more to the fact that this all must change. I

continue my work by bringing awareness to social media and spreading the word of all that is happening. Any small step towards the end of social injustice is a step I am worth taking.

Social justice played a huge role in the year of 2020, especially in the Presidential election. At seventeen years old, I was given an amazing opportunity to serve as a poll worker on November 3, 2020. Seventeen hours flew by during my time at the polling place. I served as a Line Manager, meaning I welcomed people in, maintained the line to make sure others were six-feet apart, and helped people find their way to their designated voting area. I first-hand experienced what was to come for me in my upcoming years as a soon to be registered voter. I worked alongside adults who made me feel welcomed, and I enjoyed seeing people happy to vote. This whole experience truly made me feel as if I was making a difference. Hearing Vice President Elect Kamala Harris thank the poll workers during her acceptance speech made me so happy inside.

Serving for a better future is all I am about. I wish to continue my work in social justice to make sure that the future generations to come feel safe and welcomed no matter who they are, because in the end we are all people. When it comes to Serviam, AMSU has taught me that there is never a limit to where you can serve. (Tyler)



To me, *SERVIAM* is an act that makes others happy and makes you proud, whether it is for a few minutes, an hour, or constantly for a while. It makes a difference when you impact a person's life with a moment of love, hope, and charity. It can change how people think, lead others to be nicer, and lead them to look toward giving some time to help others. Service is a way to give back to the world, especially your community or places that need kindness. When I do any type of service, I commit to it and put my all into it. Seeing smiles or giving some hope, is the prize. In our world, especially now, it is the time to act and spread your gifts that God gave you.

Before I was in high school, I knew that giving back was good, and helping others who need it the most around you were God's hope for us to do. I knew the basics of goodwill and giving back. But due to the Academy of Mount St. Ursula my perspective changed, and the meaning of service meant more. The word service had a deeper meaning to it, and a different feeling. I have learned a lot about giving from your heart instead of just doing it for your grades. Being able to join and interact with so many of the opportunities is so wonderful. Connecting with your peers like sisters and giving yourself to something significant. Creating the best memories to last you a lifetime. After your service you feel so positive, uplifting, and like your skipping in Candy Land. During these hard times we all need some guidance, tenderness, and especially God's presence.

I use my gifts and energy of faith & hope to guide my fellow peers this year by organizing weekly virtual rosary prayer for the school community and motivating them to be closer to God. With one-sixth of the students and staff joining and participating, we all unite having a spiritual connection with God. I also am encouraging and leading our school community to also donate



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in our food collection for Thanksgiving, and now to donate toys and books to children in our area. Everyone deserves to have some holiday spirit, and I am glad to cheer others in doing so. Without hesitation I learned to continue to give because in return God knows your following his words.

My wish to everyone around the world is for people to realize how blessed they are and how rich you are with God's love. There are less fortunate people, so we need to take part in helping them. Give your time to spread happiness with all our possibilities. When we give back and follow Jesus' life, we are given mercy and treasures. (Lauren)



For me, it is essential to serve the people in my community, especially those who are overlooked. Doing so brings me joy and allows me to learn from the people I help. Though the social/economic problems of today are overwhelming, any small contribution we make is a step closer to resolving these problems.

Sexism, for example, is a major problem in the world, yet it remains largely ignored. Women have fought for their rights for centuries but are still treated unjustly. To bring awareness to the injustices we experience, I joined my school's United Nations Connections Club.

In this club, we are currently working on a manifesto that advocates for the rights of women. Having grown up in a male-dominated household, in our meetings, I emphasized the need to educate men on the challenges that women face and how the biases against women usually originate from the home. My club members' accounts of their experiences growing up in a patriarchal society motivate me to continue my fight for equality. This year we are limited on the "physical" actions we can take, but we continue to promote female empowerment throughout our school and have important conversations with our community.

Another overlooked group in our world is the underprivileged. According to a study by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United States is the second country, in the world, with the highest rate of poverty. However, when we pass beggars on the street, we barely bat an eye. These people are also human but regarded by society as "less than". Knowing this information, I had to do something. Intending to do just that, I volunteered in a Thanksgiving soup kitchen held by my church.

I was excited to help the less fortunate, but I was most enthused about the opportunity to learn from them. After setting the tables and decorating the cafeteria, I shared food to the line of



people patiently waiting. After my job was done, I sat at a table to have lunch with the people I served. It was important for me to get to know them and see life from their viewpoint. These jovial people shared with me their life lessons, childhood anecdotes, and I shared some of the best laughs I had that year. Moreover, they taught me how to truly appreciate life and all its gifts and not to give too much value to material things. Although I arrived at the site to make their day better, it was I who left grinning from ear to ear.

It was truly gratifying to make a difference in my world, no matter how big or small. I am thankful that during each of my service activities there was always something new to learn. However, I am most grateful to understand what it means to be the "light of the world" in the darkest of times. (Zanyda)



Service, as defined by Oxford Languages, is the action of helping or doing work for someone.

Though this is true, here at the Academy of Mount St. Ursula, service is more than doing a good act for hours. Service is making connections with others. Service is loving those around you and caring for them. Service is making sure others have what they need and helping them receive it.

In my case, service is helping families receive a meal for Thanksgiving and giving toys and books to the Concourse House children during the holidays to spread some hope and cheer.

My very first year at the Academy of Mount St. Ursula, my junior sister's friend, who also took the train to school with me, one day mentioned to me a club she was a part of called Serviam Leaders. She informed me of the activities they did and insisted I go to their first meeting. I attended with an open mind, despite being tired, but I was immediately intrigued by the club's activities and willingness to live out our school motto of Serviam. From that day forward, I attended every meeting and have now become president of the club. Despite having helped with marketing for the Part of the Solution (POTS) Canned Food Drive we host every year, I decided it would be of utmost importance to collect food this year especially, as many families are suffering from the pandemic and many do not have enough money to pay for food. We were able to raise 372 items of food for the non-profit POTS Food Pantry located in the Bronx.

This year, as the holidays are quickly approaching us, the school's Serviam Leaders Club has joined with the religion department to run the Toy/Book Collection Drive for the children in the Grand Concourse House, transitional housing for women and children. We are collecting toys for children under the age of nine and lightly used books for people of all ages. We know the impact of not being able to be celebrate during a time in which everyone is receiving gifts can have on a

child, and so, we want to spread cheer and love in these uncertain times. Knowing that by sparing a few dollars I can put a smile on a child's face brings me comfort and happiness, so why not spread that feeling by having others give during these times.

It is always important to give back to our communities and help those who need it, and during this pandemic, through events like the POTS Canned Food Drive and the Toy/Book Collection Drive, we are able to give to others and spread love, cheer, and positivity. Though a small, humble gesture, helping takes the stress off a parent's shoulders and alleviate their not knowing where their family's next meal will come from can be a huge help and boost their morale and have hope that things will get better. Putting a smile on a child's face during these times of tremendous loss can have a positive impact on those little ones. I am still finding ways to help others in these unprecedented times, but I will not give up on my community. (Annette)



When I was in grade school, every Sunday I would see both my older sisters go to church early. I would see them at church, and they would wave at me, but stay where they were at for longer periods of time. Meanwhile I was already at home, doing my homework. At first, I didn't understand why they always went to church and not stay with the family and me.

But once I entered the ACADEMY of MOUNT ST. URSULA, I realized why. I finally understood why my sisters never stopped. It wasn't because of service hours, instead, it was because of the true meaning of Serviam. At school, the main motto that I would see everywhere I walked was the word "Serviam", which in Latin means "I will serve". AMSU requires us to earn service hours.

So, I decided to go to the church that my sisters went to, which is St. Brendan and St. Ann, and ask if I can earn service hours, by helping the teachers at Sunday class. So, I asked the director and she said yes. Every Sunday, I needed to wake up early, and be at the church's front door on time. At first, I always felt sleepy. Once I was there, I needed to organize the tables for each teacher, prepare the teachers with their right supplies, attendance sheet, and bags. Once, I was done, I could talk to those who were also helping the other teachers or wait for the teacher and students. As the teachers and students go to their seats, the director, and staff, would say a morning prayer, and pray for our daily lives, those whom we love and always say "God is Good all the time, All the time God was Good".

Then I would attend the class that I would help that day. Once the lesson was done, we went to mass, and then we sent the students to their parents, and I would then go home. After doing this routine on Sunday, sure I did feel tired, but as the day went on, I felt good. It always reminded me of the times that I would see my both sisters waking up and going to church. As I remember this piece, I started to connect why my sisters would take so long. It was because every time we go to Sunday class, we always learn something new, and see the good side on Sunday. Realizing that no matter how difficult your day will be, helping others or lending a hand

to someone will surely make your day worth cherishing.

When the pandemic happened, it was really different, because I had to stay home, and I felt that I couldn't do anything to help or serve those around me. So what I decided to do was to send some pictures and cards to doctors, thanking them for saving many lives and mine. And when school started, instead of attending and helping out at Sunday school, at St. Brendan and St. Ann, I donated some canned food to the Academy of Mount St. Ursula, knowing that every can that I bring in can help others. After experiencing Sunday school, giving cards to doctors and the food pantry, I learned more about the word "Serviam" as I serve. Revealing to me, that I can and will achieve the possibility of helping others. serving others, and that as I serve those who are around me, it will lead me to a life of respect, loyalty, and service. (Sarai)



This past summer I created a charity called The Peanut Butter Better Challenge. After realizing how affected people were by the Coronavirus I instantly knew that I wanted to help and hopefully bring joy to families in need. I made a GoFundMe page to support my program, where I encouraged people to donate money so that I can supply peanut butter to families at risk. Peanut butter is one of the most in-demand food products by pantries in the US.

I posted the link to my GoFundMe page all over my social media and got people to donate. I then used the GoFundMe money to donate jars of Jif peanut butter to pantries in The Bronx and in Manhattan. I also reached out to the head of corporate communications at The J.M. Smucker Company, owner of Jif, to ask for their help. They liked the program and graciously donated a few jars to AMSU. Also, due to Covid-19, AMSU had canceled our annual service day which supports local charities in person. Fortunately, my charity was not affected and I was able to continue PBBC. While I was on the internet, I stumbled across a quote by Dr. Loretta Scott and she said, “We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.” This quote is all about raising awareness and helping us to see what we can do to help others. We are not alone in this world and it only takes one person to make a difference. I am just one of those people who want to make a difference. I want to make them realize that someone out there cares about them.

(Lexie)



It was an honor to present and create a PowerPoint presentation for one of our saints, St. Ursula. During the process of gathering the information, I learned many different facts about St. Ursula that I never knew before. This is my first year at Academy of Mount Saint Ursula and I had some of my friends say that it is brave of me to present such a power-point like this since I'm new to the school. Back in October, the *Serviam* Leaders had a meeting where we were discussing some things to do for the feast day of St. Ursula. Amanda and I volunteered to make the PowerPoint presentation.

It took about one to one and half days to complete the St. Ursula presentation. I was in charge of designing a power-point so it was eye-catching. I chose the color scheme, pictures, text size, and more. Amanda and I came up with different topics that would be quite important to include in the presentation. I researched St. Ursula's background story, her feast day. Amanada researched up why she was inspirational and her death. I had a lot of fun researching and creating the slides. Amanda and I put our ideas on the table to create something amazing. One of the *Serviam* Leaders' members assisted us with grammar mistakes and other things as well. After that, we were done with the St. Ursula presentation and it was shown to the school. (Analisa)



During the beginning of the new school year, I assisted the Academy of Mount St. Ursula in filming an admissions video to promote our school. I know how important these videos and forms of promotion are for the school, so I felt honored to help. Between recording my voice for the initial promotional video and making the virtual open house, I felt very privileged to have helped. Yet, I was nervous while doing the two videos. In all, this was a worthwhile experience and a great way to live out SERVIAM.

When I initially did the voice recording for the promo video, I was very nervous yet excited to try something new. After meeting the videographers and being assisted by Ms. DiBenedetto, our Service Activity Coordinator, I felt more comfortable and confident in my performance. When the promo video had premiered, I had a sense of happiness because I tried something new, but at the same time I contributed to AMSU's legacy. I was able to serve them, contribute, and appeal to the class of 2025. Soon after, I was offered the ability to be the virtual tour guide and I was so excited to partake in this new way of recruitment. The filming experience was great, the videographers were patient and Ms. Iman, our Admissions and Recruitment Director was right by my side to practice with me, which eased my nervousness. Upon seeing the final product, I was so proud to see all the hard work we put in come to life in the form of an amazing product. I really love the feedback it received, and I hope all the future Lady Bears who watched it felt just as great upon seeing it.

In all, these two opportunities have given me the chance to truly practice SERVIAM. I love to help the school in any way. The audio recording and the virtual tour made me feel so honored and lucky to have even been considered for a role in this process. I am pleased to be awarded with a Service Award because it shows that even a time like now we can still find





pockets of purity; pockets where we find smiles, happiness, and a genuine want to of service to others. These opportunities gave me the chance to find the good during this difficult time and put my energy toward the better. Thank you so much! (Amanda)



Being in *ServiamLeaders* has really changed me for the better these past years. I remember the first time that I joined this club as a sophomore and I just fell in love with the atmosphere and its dedication in giving back to the needy. Giving to those less fortunate is very important, especially during this pandemic. Not everyone can celebrate the holiday as we all can which is why we need to act and at least make someone smile. This club has opened my eyes and heart in many ways, and I am proud to say that I have contributed in at least making a difference in this world whether it is just putting in the effort to organize drives or just giving in some books.

*Serviam* is an attitude in which anyone, no matter his/her situation or hopelessness, can come together and make a change in our community. No matter the amount or size, every item we collect matters. In our club, we all come together to brainstorm ways to uplift everybody even during times of despair. Therefore I really love this club and its environment. When Junior year came by, I knew I wanted to continue this club, and with the help of two other individuals, we made it happen.

*Serviam* is not only a motto that our school follows but it is something that we should all live by. Service shouldn't be only done just because you are forced to, it must be genuine. Our generosity and ability to give, out of the kindness of our hearts, are the key factors in taking steps forward to make a difference. When you perform acts of kindness, you connect with people and make long lasting memories that will never be forgotten. Being involved in something so monumental has really evolved my interpretation of the world around me. I am honestly very grateful for this experience and for AMSU in providing this opportunity for all of the girls in the school and I hope we can continue to give and do more for everyone around us. (Sherilyn)



## St. Ursula Academy-Toledo

**Kids First Summer Camp** was created by Anthony Johnson. Before starting the company, Anthony Johnson worked for **Kids Unlimited**, but he wanted to run his own company and specifically cater to children in need of a secure environment. **Kidz First Summer Camp** accepts children from preschool-8th grade. The camp usually lasts for about 10 weeks and is open Monday-Friday from 7:45 am-3:30 pm.

From 7:45 am-8:30 am, campers eat breakfast and, when finished, interact by playing Connect Four. Mr. Johnson specifically chose Connect Four because all ages at the camp are able to play the game and it enhances a number of skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and reaction time. After Connect Four, campers and staff clean up, and the campers are taken to the restroom. Class for campers begins at 9:00 in the morning and lasts until 11:00 in the morning. During the first hour, students complete reading/writing packets and various English Language Arts activities. The second hour of class consists of mathematics and flashcards. Students are taught information and skills that will be learned the following school year. For example, students coming from second grade will be considered third graders and will be taught third-grade information during class time.

After class, students participate in calisthenics to increase the amount of exercise they get in a day. For the remainder of the day, the staff assists the campers in various activities and games such as arts and crafts, culinary arts, gardening, football camp, basketball camp, tennis camp, water games, team bonding games, etc. The most popular game is dodgeball hence Mr. Johnson has his own dodgeball league that takes place during the winter sports season. Lunch is

also included in the day, as well as a snack.

I chose to volunteer consistently at **Kidz First Summer Camp** because of my experience with the camp as a camper. I attended **Kids Unlimited Summer Camp** at Anthony Johnson's site and loved the experience; however, I did notice the tension between Anthony Johnson and the leader of Kids Unlimited. When Mr. Johnson decided to establish his own summer camp, I grew to love it even more. **Kidz First** provided a sense of structure/discipline as well as fun in my childhood. I enjoyed the day-to-day events as well as the occasional talent shows, guest speakers, and field trips. Anthony Johnson is a wonderful camp director and has a way of understanding children and their development. He acted as a father figure for us all which strengthened the bond of campers. While attending and volunteering at **Kidz First Summer Camp**, I was amazed by the number of foster families and disturbed children (slight mental disorder/ children in need of structure) enrolling in the camp. Because of his psychology degree, Mr. Johnson was usually able to provide aid to those families and children able to provide aid to those families and children and ease tensions between the two. I believe **Kidz First Summer Camp** is a company that is doing good in the community and I wanted to be a part of it, which is why I decided to continue volunteering at the camp. (Dakya)

