

Aaron McCoy – Miami Valley Christian Academy (MVCA) – MVCA

I first learned of Aubrey Rose in 2012 when my brother, Adam, received a scholarship from the Foundation. Since that time, I've become more familiar with Aubrey's story and her family's mission to positively impact others just as she did through her bright smile and kind heart. While volunteering along side my family at Aubrey Rose Foundation events, I personally have witnessed the Hollenkamp family and other volunteers help fulfill their mission of uplifting others. I recognize what this looks like, and the influence it can have on a person's outlook on life. I've appreciated the opportunity to be part of these events and to help the Foundation in making a difference in the lives of others.

Volunteering for organizations such as the Aubrey Rose Foundation and others is one way to serve and help people, but I also realize that the chance to impact others through my words and actions occurs every day and in any situation – even on the baseball field. You see, I love the game of baseball and have played on the same community-league team and with the same group of boys since the second grade. It's given me the perfect chance to be a positive example and to inspire my teammates. From the beginning, I have initiated prayer before each game, praying a blessing over our team, opponents, coaches, umpires and spectators. This has had such an impact on my teammates that other players step up to lead the team in prayer when I'm unable to make a game.

One of my friends on the team has an uncle who has Down syndrome and serves as the batboy for the team. Always smiling, he brightens everyone's day, especially mine. His parents often have thanked me for being such a good friend to him, but honestly, I'm the one who is most grateful for our friendship.

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He encourages me to treat all people with kindness and respect. I believe that witnessing our friendship has influenced others in a positive way, on and off the baseball field.

All my life I have been actively involved in my church, including serving as an acolyte, usher, and liturgist. In the past year, I became a regular assistant in our younger children's ministry. Most of the kids there look up to me, which reminds me of the importance of serving as a good role model for them as well. We also have a six-year old neighbor who often asks me to "come out to play with him." Whenever I have the chance, I try to take him up on the offer and catch baseball with him or shoot some basketball. I know that he often watches me practice my shooting drills or pitching to my dad. I know that I need to show him how to keep my cool through adversity, be respectful, and stay humble.

Our school also offers students many ways to serve our community, including participation in MVCA's annual "Servathon." This is when, each year, a group of students select a place where they choose to serve. One of my favorite Servathon days was spent serving at Visionaries & Voices, an organization for artists with disabilities. This opportunity allowed me to connect with these talented men and women through our shared interest in art and to help with improvements for their gallery. While I may have been there to serve, I left feeling as though I was the one who had been truly inspired and blessed. That is exactly the type of feeling I hope to leave with whoever may cross my path in all aspects of my life.