

Michael Mullins- St. Nicholas Academy- Archbishop Moeller High School

Page 1 of 2

Learning about Aubrey Rose and the great impact that she had on so many people in such a short time has been truly inspiring to me. In my academic and extracurricular activities, I hope to have a fraction of the impact on those around me that Aubrey had on the people around her. She is an inspiration for me to continue my volunteerism and service to the community.

During my time at St. Nicholas Academy in Reading, OH, I have been forwarded many great opportunities to give back to my school, my church, and the community. Since my seventh grade year, I have participated in the "Big Buddy" program, which pairs older students with younger students in the school. In my seventh grade year when we were assigned buddies, my teacher trusted me to serve as the big buddy for a special needs kindergarten student. This was an honor to me because she said she could trust me to take care of him and make sure he was included. I learned a lot from this experience, and it really opened my eyes to something I had never experienced before. My teacher's trust in me was a great honor.

Aside from the Big Buddy program at St. Nicholas, I have been given the opportunity to participate in various canned food drives for less fortunate families in our parish, as well as volunteering through my local parish, Holy Trinity. Each year, my family volunteers for an entire weekend at the Holy Trinity Festival. I help my mom coordinate the children's area games and prizes along with anything else she needs. In total, we successfully raise over \$3,000 for our parish.

Outside of school, I am involved with a program known as the Cincinnati Fire Department Fire Explorers. This organization allows me to prepare for my future career as a fireman through various training exercises and community service. My interest in this program comes from a long line of civil service in my family. My father, my uncles, my cousins, and my grandfather have all been members or are currently members of fire and police departments across the entire world. This service is my calling, and I am very passionate about giving back and protecting others.

Community involvement in the fire explorer program has allowed me to give back to multiple areas in the city. The Cincinnati Fire Explorer program recently partnered with the International Association of Fire Fighters Union 48 to donate over 600 turkeys to needy families during the Thanksgiving holiday. I volunteered by unloading turkeys and distributing them to various families. I was also a volunteer at the Special Needs Homerun Derby this summer. I gave tours of our firetruck and taught special needs children about the importance of fire safety. It was amazing to me when I saw how excited these children got when they saw mascots from local sports teams and when they saw the firetrucks.

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Page 2 of 2

Volunteering my time with the fire explorers has been very special to me. I have been able to partner with other large organizations, such as the American Red Cross, to participate in a day of service where we issued and installed smoke detectors in poverty-stricken areas of Cincinnati. This gave me the chance to interact with members of the community that need the most help. I have also been able to give back through education. I have participated in two local events that taught fire safety to local youth. At Crossroads Church, I helped at an educational session where kids were able to interact with fireman and learn about the fire truck and equipment. I have also volunteered through the fire explorers with the local deaf community at a fire safety event for the deaf. At this event, we shared and demonstrated new devices such as flashing smoke-detectors, and pillows that vibrate when a fire or smoke is detected. In total about 100 participants visited our booth.

Every year, I am also a volunteer at the Cincinnati Fire Department Open House. On this day, all 26 local fire departments in Cincinnati are open to the public to come visit and tour. In my time, I have helped by assisting with tours in the fire safety “smoke-house” which teaches children how to safely exit a fire in a simulation with theatrical fog. I also support by preparing food and snacks for community members at each fire department. I have also been a volunteer with Keep Cincinnati Beautiful by participating in an annual clean-up. I was assigned to pick up litter in low-income areas of the city with other volunteers from the organization. During this day, we also painted various fire hydrants in the area, as well as handed out literature on fire safety to members of the community.

Two of my biggest honors came at a time of great tragedy in the City of Cincinnati. After the death of Firefighter Daryl Gordon, I was asked by a close friend of his family to serve as an altar attendant for the funeral. Secondly, I was a part of the funeral for Officer Sonny Kim after his line-of-duty death. Paying a final tribute to both of these distinguished civil servants was a huge honor to me. These two men gave the ultimate sacrifice to help protect our community. I am forever grateful for their service, and humbled that I was asked to be a part of their funerals.

Giving back my time to the community and those in need is very important to me, and to my family. I have been blessed with a great family, a great home, and a great education and I am aware that not everyone my age has been given such a great opportunity. For that reason, I feel that it is very important for me to give to those less fortunate than me. Ever since I can remember, my parents have taught me the importance of giving back and helping others. I can think of no better way to help others than to ensure their health and safety. I hope that someday in my career, that I am able to make a difference, touch someone’s life, and make a community a better place, just as Aubrey Rose did in her three short years of life.