

Share... Care... Joy

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In my fourteen years of life, I have learned many things about myself through community service. I am very fortunate compared to others in this world as I have a supportive family, a place to sleep, and food to eat. From volunteering, I have learned to be grateful for the “small things” that people say and do and to appreciate what I have. In addition, I have discovered that through my actions, I can make the lives of people around me a little brighter. Although Aubrey Rose was not here on earth for a long time, her giving spirit still lives among those who have benefitted from her family’s kindness and generosity. It is my hope that through my service, I can also provide a legacy to those whom I serve. I believe that it is important to give to my family, to my community, and to my school.

For the last nine years, I have attended Bethany School. Every Monday and Thursday, we say a prayer that asks us to remember that we need each other, love each other, and serve one another. We are reminded that each of us has a special role to play to help our school. I have served Bethany School in many ways that I hope have made a difference to the school community. I have volunteered to be a student ambassador who shows prospective families around the Bethany campus. This is one of my favorite things to do as I enjoy answering the families’ questions and watching the excitement on their faces as they learn more about our school. I have also participated in Bethany Blooms; we planted flowers to help make our campus look nice. I am also on the Bethany track and volleyball team. I help represent our school well by cheering for my teammates and encouraging them. Bethany has given so much to me including a good education and good character. Bethany has also taught me that a family is not only defined by the people with whom one lives, but by those who care in one’s community.

In my community, there are so many people who have given to me and to my mother. My mother was in a bad car accident in September. We have had the full support of our community. They brought us dinners, gave us financial support, sent flowers, donated medical equipment and did many other helpful gestures. All these gestures were out of the kindness of their hearts. I had the opportunity to experience what it feels like to be the recipient of such caring. I feel that helping the community that has helped us so much is a great way to give back. Some examples of service in which I have participated are helping in classrooms at my mother’s school, volunteering at Mathew 25, Hands Against Hunger, Kennedy Heights Art Center, and Ronald McDonald House. At the Ronald McDonald House, I created party boxes filled with decorations and party toys and games. Even though I didn’t get to see the children who received my boxes, the receptionist said I had touched their lives by just making the boxes as they would

use them in celebrating their birthdays and other important events. She explained that due to the medical expenses they families have, there is often not enough money for “extras.” It made me feel good to be able to provide these items that will bring them joy. I also really liked volunteering at my mom’s school because I had different jobs to do there. I helped teachers plan their next class, helped with concerts and I helped grade papers. I also liked being with the children who attend there. The children have hard lives at home because many live in poverty. I spent time with them helping with projects or listening to their stories which made them smile. Many of the children loved being able to share time with someone.

In our family, the small gestures matter the most. One example is when I visited my grandfather while he was in the hospital. I visited him with my mother. We talked to him and brought him treats to eat. Later when my grandfather was in a nursing home for rehab, my mother and I brought in the nursing home’s dogs and brought them to see my grandfather. He was very happy to see the dogs and was delighted to see us. I also found the rehab cat which my grandfather also enjoyed seeing and petting. As I took the animals back, we visited other residents and they also enjoyed see the dogs. During Thanksgiving, I also cooked most of the Thanksgiving dinner. This really helped the family relax more and have a better holiday. I saw how their faces lit up when I did these gestures and that lit up my day as well. I know by people’s facial reactions that I have touched their day and that always brightens up my day.

In conclusion, doing kind things for others is a big part of my life. I love doing service projects, helping those around me, and seeing the joy in people’s faces after I have helped them. Aubrey Rose not only brought joy to the Hollenkamp family, but she also brought them light. This light helped them to create this foundation to assist others to find their own light that they will continue to shine onto others.