

## **Shannon Burdett – Our Lady of Grace – McAuley High School**

Volunteering—it doesn't just help others, but it enriches you as well.

I've been exposed to many volunteering opportunities. When I was younger, I was blessed with being able to participate for many years in such programs and activities like Vacation Bible School at Our Lady of the Rosary and fun programs at the Mt. Healthy branch of the public library. I was thankful for the people who volunteered and gave their time to provide safe and fun activities for me, and I thought it was important to give back and help the kids have as much fun as I did. So when I was old enough, I decided to volunteer in those same programs to give those opportunities to other young kids. When I turned a teen and was allowed to sign up, I applied to be a volunteer at the same Mt. Healthy branch where I participated in summer programs. I spent my last summer helping my local librarian with her kid programs. At OLR's VBS I was a youth leader for two years after I had enjoyed the great activities they provided to me when I attended as a young participant.

I've also been an alter server at my parish and school masses for four years now. I wanted to be a server because I think it's important to help at Church. Like John Paul II said, my generation are the leaders of the Church tomorrow, so it's important to be prepared, today.

But no volunteering experience has made such a positive impact on me as the volunteering I've done in West Virginia every summer. My family and I have been driving down to West Virginia since I was three. We volunteer with others to repair houses, tutor kids, operate camps, play "banana" BINGO with those at Mullen's Manor (a residential facility for mentally challenged adults), and visit the residents living in Wyoming County, West Virginia. Just talking to them and giving them a smile seems to make a world of difference. The program we are a part of is called the PVs, for Passionate Volunteers, which I think truly describes us. A bunch of people, from all over the country, all living under one roof, working together to change lives. Many of us who volunteer are complete strangers to one another, but somehow our hearts guide us to work together and become close friends all with a common mission of serving the needy of West Virginia.

One occasion that has continuously stuck in my mind is the time the PVs were having a basketball camp for any of the local kids who wanted to learn basketball skills and to have fun. Some of the kids were more skilled in basketball than others, but in the end we gave everyone a trophy. That really made everyone feel special, and it made me feel special to see all of them so happy about something so small, like having someone to shoot hoops with.

These experiences were part of why I choose McAuley High School. When I go to McAuley High School next year, I'm very excited to indulge in their vast variety of volunteering opportunities. McAuley has a whole club devoted to intense, deep work in volunteering. Your Aubrey Rose Scholarship will help me to be a part of all the action.

Reflecting on my past experiences and looking forward to what I can do at McAuley has now made me realize what volunteering is about. It's about the special feeling you get when

you see that the person you helped is really grateful and genuinely thankful for your work, no matter how small it is. That feeling drives you to keep helping others in your everyday life, like holding a door for someone older at school or helping your parents with chores without being asked.

And that's what volunteering is all about. It doesn't just help others, but it enriches you as well.