

## **Carolyn Moon - Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy - Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy**

Many people tell me that I have a servant's heart. I am 13 years old and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I have been volunteering and serving with my family since I really could understand what was happening. Serving others has always been a part of my weekly routine, monthly routine, or yearly routine. It could also be something out of my "routine", but to me it is still a part of me because that is what I do, serve.

Every Saturday, I go and volunteer at a place called the Healing Center that is connected with my church, the Vineyard Community Church. The Healing Center is a social services place where people who usually don't have enough money to buy groceries or clothing can get those things for free. The Healing Center also has job coaching, tax services, citizenship classes, and much more. While all of the adults do all of these things, they have to have somewhere for their children to stay and play. That is where I fall in. Ever since my dad started to volunteer there, I wanted to help out with the kids. My dad lost his job about seven years ago. That would mean that I have been volunteering in the Kids Club House, as they call it, since I was about 6 or 7 years old. Each time I go, I could see new faces or I could see old faces. The funny thing is that you are happy to see the kids, but that means that their family might not be doing well. If you don't see the kids for a while, you are sad because you miss them, but that means that they are doing well. I can't imagine what the lives that the children have at home are like. Some of the kids I have seen grow up through God and their relationships with others. I sometimes wonder, have I made a difference in that child's life even if I just saw them for one day? Each Saturday, the kids will come and go all day. Some of them are lucky enough to play, then do a fun Bible activity, and after that, when their parents start to come pick them up, they get to watch a VeggieTales movie and have a snack.

Last year, I got the opportunity to go with my school on a mission trip to Monterrey, Mexico with Back2Back Ministries. As a seventh grader who loves to work with kids and show them God's love, I thought that this was an amazing opportunity to share that. When we got down to Monterrey, Mexico, we went back to Back2Back's campus to play with the high schoolers there. The next day was really exciting. We got to go on a field trip with the orphans of a nearby orphanage. There we got to pair up with a child and spent the day with them to make them feel special. At that moment, I realized that serving God was not just helping people get food or money, it might just be a simple act of kindness to a stranger. For me, that was spending the day with this little girl who might have felt like she was important. I was so happy that I got to see a smile on the little girl's face. It kind of reminded me of how Aubrey always had a smile on her face even though she was going through some bad things. This little girl was facing the trouble that she possibly had no parents, but she still had a smile on her face.

Later on the trip, we got to show more of God's love and kindness by playing with them in the morning, then taking them to school while we went to work on their new orphanage. I was really excited to know that I was helping build something that could change a child's life. I will get the opportunity in February of 2015 to go back down there. I hope that I will get to experience the change that I may have made on these little orphans.

Since I was in second grade, I have been in American Heritage Girls. American Heritage Girls is an organization that is like girl scouts, but with a Christian focus. Their motto is "Faith, Service, Fun". I think that my favorite part about American Heritage Girls was the "Service" part. We did many service projects throughout our school and community. An example of the service projects we do is planting flowers at our school. It makes me feel good inside knowing that I helped out my school by making it a better place. Another example would be going to the Ronald McDonald House, where I prepared midday snacks and crafts for the families of a sick child. We also sometimes pack to-go snacks for the families for if they needed to quickly grab a snack to go over to the hospital. We got to write encouraging notes on the bags and on note cards to lift up the spirits of the parents and siblings. Now that I feel like God is leading me in a different way, I help with the third grade girls in their journey in American Heritage Girls.

I am also a part of NJHS (National Juniors Honor Society) at my school. In this group, we serve our school and community. This year I am a part of the Thanksgiving basket committee and the Funding Faith committee. In the Thanksgiving basket committee, we get to organize baskets of Thanksgiving dinners to give out to people in the community. This year we worked with City Gospel Mission. On the Funding Faith committee, we collect and organize the money that our school raises to go on the mission trip for our seventh and eighth graders (as listed above). With this money, we get to give it to Back2Back ministries to give to an orphanage to take the kids on a field trip or give them extra supplies. Also in NJHS, we have to complete at least 25 hours of service.

For the past five years, I have been honored in getting the Presidential Service Award. There are three levels to the award as a child or teenager. 50 hours for bronze, 75 hours for silver, and 100 hours for gold. Since I was in third grade, I got the gold award. Each year I got 100 hours or more of service in a year. This year I will get the gold award again for over 100 hours of service.

Working and serving with the Ronald McDonald House, NJHS, American Heritage Girls, Back2Back, and the Healing Center, has been a dream of mine. I really think that this is the way that God is leading my path. I believe God is showing me what I really am supposed to do. That is to serve Him and His people. I have learned through my experiences that serving could be as little as giving someone a hug or as big as committing every Saturday to volunteering. God has shown me that just by serving Him, I can impact the whole world. I would love to carry this love on through high school and

on into my career. I would like to do just as Aubrey has done and make an everlasting impact on the world.