

## **Julia Rosa Helm - Summit Country Day - Summit Country Day**

I was 2 years old when my sister Rocio Isabelle was born. Little did I know how much my life was about to change by being a big sister! My sister was born with Down syndrome, had a stroke, was diagnosed with Leukemia when she was 2, and the chemotherapy for the cancer caused a form of Autism. She is non-verbal and functions at about a 1-year-old level. Her Autism diagnosis came with a lot of sensory issues that have been pretty challenging for our family. Watching my parent's unconditional love and positive disposition throughout the years has really shaped my attitude about life. I learned that a life can change in an instant and realized how much of an impact I could have on my family. I had the power to comfort, encourage, and strengthen them by being unselfish, helpful, and kind to my sister and my parents. I have been involved in teaching my sister sign language and in helping her learn some tasks that can make her become more independent and I've offered a helping hand for whatever was needed. I am very proud of my family and I'm glad I've been a part of helping my family remain positive and resilient. Being able to turn my little sister's tears into a big smile fills me with joy, but I also have developed passion for serving and bringing comfort to others outside my family. One act of kindness no matter how big or small can make an unbelievable difference in someone's life and I want to be part of making a difference even if it is in just a few people's lives.

This past Christmas Eve was particularly special because my parents and I hosted 5 foster children between the ages of 5 and 10 at our home. I was involved in ordering and wrapping gifts for them and helping my family prepare the meal for our young guests. My mom and I went to pick them up at 2:00 pm and we all headed to our church's children service as we sang Christmas carols. After church we went home, decorated our tree, and sat at the table and prayed together. After dinner, while they were enjoying dessert, I put their presents under the tree. They were so excited and appreciative while opening their little gifts. There is definitely no doubt that giving brings much more joy than receiving. Their beaming little faces were the highlight of the night!

I have been involved in various service projects with my church and school. I have volunteered hours making blankets for a women's shelter, raking leaves for the elderly with a group of friends from church, and serving at a soup kitchen down town with my dad and family. I have also developed a special interest in an organization I've been volunteering at for the last few summers, called Summer Impact, formerly known as Awaken The City. The vision of this organization is to awaken generations to serve, awaken a city to hope, and to transform the world through the Grace of Christ. Through this program I've had the opportunity to serve and bring hope to an under-resourced inner city population, including children and parents in urban Cincinnati. From volunteering hours at Meals on Wheels and an inner city day care facility to delivering furniture to people in need, it is the human connection and the ability to bring hope and a smile that I love the most.

