

Abigail (Abby) Spencer – Nativity School – St. Ursula Academy

To be honest, writing an essay like this one makes me uncomfortable. In my family, it has always been a way of life to help others without telling everyone what we do. It is important for us to live this life the way we are called, but not to boast about the kind of people we would like others to see. When I was encouraged to write this essay and I understood that I could win a scholarship to help with my high school tuition, I decided this was well worth it.

Helping and serving others is how I think I make a difference in others' lives. From early on, I can remember "helping" my mom fold and sort blankets that were collected and donated for children in need through Project Linus. Helping older people in nursing homes is another way that I affect the community. My aunt has worked at two different nursing homes, and I have helped her many times in both facilities. We normally make arts and crafts, go around to visit different rooms, or play a game with the older people like balloon volleyball. Whenever we are with the residents, they are smiling and seem engaged. This is always the part that gives me the most joy. It makes me realize that even though these people may have lost many others that they cared about, they can still smile and be joyful when some little kids are being crazy and helping them with projects. Working with my family to help others is an important part of my life.

The Golden Rule of doing unto others as I would have done unto me, is a rule we try to live by in our family. Service opportunities at Nativity School are numerous, and I have tried to get involved in as many as possible. In the fourth grade, there was a service opportunity called Catherine's Kids Club. The group met after school once a month and did arts and crafts and other projects for parishioners who were sick or in nursing homes. We also knitted baby hats for preemies born at Good Samaritan Hospital. Whenever I was free, I tried to attend these meetings and worked on whatever project was going on at that time. Another opportunity that was offered to me in the Upper School was Students Helping Others. This group of students and adult chaperones work at The Caring Place in Kennedy Heights. Mostly, we sort and organize donations received by this organization. In the sixth and seventh grade, I volunteered with a group of students once a month, but this year since more people were interested in this service opportunity, we were only allowed to sign up for three dates. Helping in my parish by cleaning the yards of some elderly parishioners before the winter months is another way that I feel that I make a difference in my community. Being involved with school and church groups to affect the lives of others positively is important to me.

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Looking at my life outside of school, I recently got involved with helping raise money for a cause that has touched me and my family. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society is one of the charities that I really enjoy helping. The H.O.P.E. Project is a fundraising event that Nativity School does every year. Students submit their ideas for the charity that they wish to help raise money and awareness for and put on a presentation about their charity in front of the Upper School students. After all the presentations, all students in the Upper School vote for the charity that they would like to support for that year. Last year, my friend and I submitted one of these presentations for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and ended being picked for the charity. I know two children at Nativity who are battling or have battled Leukemia and my Grandma has Lymphoma. The first time that I was invited to help out at a charity event for this association was their Race to Anyplace. We were a part of Team Liam, and our family and another family were responsible for cycling on stationary bikes for a 2 hour window. We collected monetary donations and contributed ourselves, and then we pedaled with our friends cheering us on. I honestly did not do very well at the cycling part, but it felt good to be helping someone in need. Liam is the child whom I babysit sometimes who is battling Leukemia, and he was spotlighted during the Race. My brother and I helped Liam's family at their yard sale to help raise money for LLS, too. The second event that I did for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society was the Light the Night Walk. My family helped raise money for the hero of the year, who was Liam. Because the walk was on a school night and we had other commitments, we were only able to attend the beginning ceremonies. I was happy to be a part of this event, and I love supporting someone in need.

Small random acts of kindness are also really important to me. Whether that means smiling to someone on the street or giving a gift to someone who thinks that no one likes them, I feel like every single one is important. I am prepared to listen if any of my friends are sad, and I can also tell jokes to lift their spirits. I am also nice to people who have not been very nice to me in the past and try to forgive people if they have hurt me or any of my friends. I don't hold grudges. Meeting new friends at events comes easily to me, and I try to make sure I include others that are alone or not with other friends.

I know I have many gifts to share with the world, and I hope by being kind and treating others the way I would like to be treated is making a positive impact on others. I hope that living this kind of life is making a difference in the world in which we live.