

## **Samara Bill- Saint Gabriel Consolidated School- Summit Country Day**

Ever since I was little, I have been told to care for the beautiful world God has created for us and my mom prays for us 'to be more like Jesus every day'. Our faith has a lot to do with how we treat the community around us. Knowing that, helping others has become one of my passions. I know that sharing my faith in that way can have a big impact on the world no matter how small the task. If I make a difference in just one person's life, that joy can spread to others.

In 2015, my mom and I went to Nicaragua. Kids younger than me were out in the streets hustling to earn money to support their families or even for a meal. I saw a sense of humbleness within every person I met. One of the translators asked a host family what they would like to have as a luxury. Initially, they couldn't even understand what a luxury was, but upon further explanation, the family said they just wanted to be together...and maybe a TV. The most important part of their lives is family. Multiple generations lived in one household with dirt floors, tarped or very thin layers of walls and sometimes an outhouse. Streams and rainwater were used to cook and bathe. Our goal for the mission was to dig a deep trench for a waterway in the village. Many people thanked us for helping them to grow as a community. The service was really eye opening and I learned to be very grateful for what I have. My mom tells people I didn't lodge a single complaint during the trip, despite working in 90 degree heat, beans and rice for every meal and using the bathroom on the side of the road. The service I did made me think how lucky I am.

For many years, I have been involved in an organization at Crossroads Church called Angel Tree. Angel Tree is a service that provides gifts for children with an incarcerated parent during the Christmas season. I have always felt a connection to the children affected by this project. I grew up in a single parent home, and I've never known what it was like to have a father or what he was like. I technically could have been a part of this organization as a child receiving gifts, but I have learned that it isn't about getting gifts. It is more about giving the gift of joy to kids and their families for Christmas. Pulling the presents out of the bag made me smile, as the kids were sitting there happily, waiting for me to call their name so they could hold their present. During Angel Tree 2016, the experience was extremely compelling. In both houses we delivered gifts to we prayed for the family, and everyone felt a sense of compassion rush over us as soon as the prayer was over. I knew that I had done a good deed for the family and God was watching over all of us.

In 2014, my mom and I were attending a Christian concert, when I met my "sister" on a Compassion International card. Eunice is now 8 years old and lives in Burkina Faso, Africa. We write short letters to each other, sharing information about our cultures and daily life. Just recently we received a letter thanking us for our Christmas gift, telling us she got candy, a biscuit, underpants, and a new outfit. She is always very grateful. Eunice has five siblings who all live in her small, dirt floored household, which sometimes floods during rainy season. A while back we received a notice that there

were political uprisings and terrorist attacks near the capital, Ouagadougou. It's shocking how our lives differ from those in different countries. Even so, we are connected by our faith, we pray for each other's needs, and I feel connected to Eunice in a special way.

I have volunteered many places in my life such as my school, church, Ronald McDonald House, Freestore Foodbank, Crayons to Computers, Matthew 25 Ministries and others. Every time I complete a service activity, I feel that it is God's plan for us to take care of one another in as many ways as possible. Volunteering has introduced me to people in different circumstances and cultures. I see the look of gratitude on people's faces, and I am filled with a sense of gratitude myself. I feel satisfied knowing I have made the world a better place by using the gifts God has given me for good. "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." - Mother Teresa.

Thank you for considering me for the Aubrey Rose scholarship. I hope to continue my service in the same Spirit.