

Rachel Hennessy - Our Lady of Lourdes - Mount Notre Dame High School

There's no better way to forget your worries and have some fun than to do service for others. It doesn't matter what kind of service as long you can get lost in it and it benefits other people. Having a positive impact on someone's life evokes a feeling that nothing else can replace. When you get involved in your community, not only will you benefit others, but you will also meet new friends and gain a wiser perspective of your own life. I have participated in Girl Scouts at my school since I was in kindergarten. This year, my troop is working towards getting our Marian Award. In preparation for receiving this award, we have done a number of service projects that benefit our community and teach us about love, compassion, and leadership. To name a few, we have sorted gifts for our parish giving tree, worked our school fish fry, and sung Christmas carols at our local nursing home. I had a lot of fun bonding with my friends during all of our Girl Scout service projects, but my favorite service project that we did was volunteer at the Ronald McDonald House.

The Ronald McDonald House is a wonderful organization that provides temporary housing for the families of patients at Children's Hospital. Last October, my Girl Scout troop decided to volunteer there. After we learned all about how RMH helps thousands of families all over the world, the volunteer director told us we would begin working with the families. I was struck with pride when she handed me my green lanyard that indicated that I was a volunteer. Half of us made snacks for the families at RMH, and the other half hosted arts and crafts for the children whose siblings were in

the hospital. I was so excited when I learned that I would get to help with the arts and crafts and meet all the kids! Three of my friends and I set up tables with different art projects. I was strangely nervous when the first little girl approached my table, the painting table. I soon realized that these nerves were silly, though. The little girl told me her name was Katie, and she wore white fuzzy pajamas and ducky slippers. She smiled at everyone and loved to tell me all about the picture she was painting for her mom. It was easy to help her, she didn't need much. All she really needed was someone to talk to as she painted. I was sad when she moved on to my friend's table, but my station was not empty for long.

Soon enough, a friendly little boy came up to me, eager to paint. He climbed up to the large chair and thanked me sweetly when I handed him a white sheet of paper and opened the paint for him. He told me about his life in Florida and asked me questions about my life, too. His favorite topic was obviously the Florida aquarium. He told me all about it and gave thoughtful answers to my questions. He even suggested that I visit it if I ever find myself in Florida. The last group of children I got to work with were a pair of bleach-blond brothers. Two of my friends and I played board games with them. We lost track of time, absorbed in our conversation and in red and yellow Uno cards. I would like to say that we let them win, but I have to be honest: the younger brother just beat us every time! I was disappointed when my troop leader announced that it was time to return our green lanyards, but my mood soon turned to excitement

when the director told us about the RMH “volunteer” program. I went straight home that night and looked this program up, growing more enthusiastic every minute I was on the RMH website. The program looked perfect for me! I love working with kids, and someday I hope to work at a children’s hospital as a doctor or a nurse. I knew that this program was perfect for me. I told myself that night that I was going to apply to be a volunteer as soon as I could.

My experience with the kids at Ronald McDonald House has brightened my life and inspired me to want to go back and volunteer there in high school. I will never forget the glowing faces of the kids I was with on my volunteer night at RMH. They were so enthusiastic and eager to play with me. What struck me the most was how happy they seemed to be to just be there with us. I loved their spirit and energy, even in the hard time they were facing. I know that I will remember this experience forever. It was the best kind of strange to know that I helped someone who was going through a hard time. My experience made me realize that even though I’m only a teenager, I can still help my community and make an impact in someone’s life. I now know that effecting change is not just something adults can do. It doesn’t matter if you’re three or fifty, anyone can have a positive impact on someone’s life. Although my Girl Scout troop just provided one fun night of crafts and snacks, I hope that the kids we worked with remember our time with them as a relaxing escape from whatever struggles they may be facing in their lives. I know that’s how I remember my time with them.

You never know when your life will change, when inspiration will strike you. I certainly didn't know that I was going to find an exciting opportunity for long-term service and self-reflection on some Saturday night with my Girl Scout troop, but I know that I have. I can't wait to see the kids that I will work with grow as I spend my high school years with them. When you get involved in your community and in the world, you affect other people's lives in ways that you probably will never even know. It is so easy to make a change; all you have to do is find a cause that you are passionate about. After my experience at the Ronald McDonald House, I realized why everyone has always told me how much they love to volunteer. One of the most rewarding ways to spend your time is to help someone who needs it. If you ever find that you have a chance to help someone in need, do! Who knows, it could become something you will want to do your whole life.