SOURCE Champion of the Month
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“Make an effort to engage in service work, even if it isn’t necessarily on a routine basis.”

What do you do as your community engagement activity?
I tutor Baltimore City School students as part of the SquashWise program.

How much time do you spend on service per week/month?
2-4 hours/week.

How did you begin to work with your community-based organization (CBO)?
I am originally from Baltimore, and when I knew I was coming back to go to JHU, I was determined to become more involved in Baltimore City community programs after the unrest that took place recently. The Community Outreach Program class offered through the school of nursing provided me with an opportunity to do just that, and through the course I was able to pair up with the SquashWise program.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?
I enjoy being able to interact with a diverse array of people that I might not otherwise be able to meet. Furthermore, I was previously a middle school teacher, so working with the students at SquashWise allows me to continue some of the aspects of teaching that I enjoyed most. Interacting with middle schoolers is always interesting, and oftentimes refreshing and fun.
How do you find time for service in your busy schedule?
SquashWise is great because they are very flexible with the amount of hours I put in. I try to do two sessions a week, but it works out usually being one session per week due to exams and other school work. Other than that, I have made it a priority in my schedule, and I have worked it out so that I tutor on days before my clinical rotations so that I don’t have assignments or exams due the next day.

Besides finding the time, what barriers related to your service have you had to overcome?
Other than scheduling, the only other troublesome aspect of service has been transportation and parking. The students and the SquashWise program have made the actual service work pretty stress free.

How has your training in Hopkins influenced the way you approach service?
The biggest takeaway from my Community Outreach class has been to approach Baltimore communities as partners rather than telling them what we think they need to do to improve. The community members are the ones who live and work their everyday, and they know their needs and goals and the most realistic approach to achieving them. The best thing that we can do at Hopkins is to collaborate with them and add our resources and knowledge to help them achieve said goals.

How does your service shape your development as a health care professional?
I suppose that community service allows you to see members of the community in a different way to provide a more complete picture of the population you serve. In the hospital, you really only see patients when they are at a vulnerable point in their lives, and your interactions can often reflect that. By interacting with people in the community, you get a more robust idea of who they are and what their passions are when they aren’t preoccupied with an acute condition and pain or discomfort.

What advice do you have for prospective students who are interested in community service?
I would tell them to make an effort to engage in service work, even if it isn’t necessarily on a routine basis. Additionally, use your talents and interests as a starting point and find a service organization that allows you to utilize them while helping the community.

What would you say to someone who is unsure of the impact his/her service would have on a community?
This is a concept that I have grappled with as an educator, as you do not necessarily get the instant gratification that you might when helping to build a house or provide a meal. However, I would encourage anyone concerned about their impact to keep the big picture in mind, as small contributions over a long period of time can become quite substantial in the long run. Furthermore, you will never make a situation worse by volunteering your time and talents, but sitting idly by could deprive a community of potential positive contributions.
What is the community service accomplishment that has affected you and/or your community the most?
This is a tough one, but I suppose the one that what has stuck with me the most thus far has been helping a student to view a math problem from a different angle, using an approach that one of my teachers showed me when I was in middle school. It may not seem like much, but the student said that it made the problem much easier to understand. That gain in confidence could potentially keep the student on track and engaged in their class as they move on to more complex topics, which would be great. It also reminded me that sometimes the smallest things are what stick with you the most, as I was using a trick that I learned in 7th grade.

Final Comments
I would just like to thank SquashWise again for allowing me to help out and for being so flexible, and I encourage more nursing students to take the COP class and pair up with an organization that matches their interests.