

SOURCE Champion of the Month
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“Community service should enhance your experience as a student not take away from it.”

What do you do as your community engagement activity?

Partner with churches and schools to address adolescent sexual health issues

How much time do you spend on service per week/month?

20%

How did you begin to work with your community-based organization (CBO)?

I work with lots of churches and schools. All of the work has begun with relationships. Being brand new to Baltimore, I relied on my colleagues to introduce me to their networks. I showed up (literally to meeting and churches) and began to strengthen those relationships.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?

I enjoy interacting with people. I’m always newly surprised by the range of different and similar experiences people have had. It shapes their perspectives and helps me understand them better.

How do you find time for service in your busy schedule?

My mom always said, “You make time for the things that are important.” This rings true for me. It’s important for me to know that my research can be used by or useful to families of color. So

involving them in formal and informal ways, just makes sense regardless of how much time it takes.

Besides finding the time, what barriers related to your service have you had to overcome?

Staying connected consistently. When you have a lot of partners, it's hard to give everyone attention all the time. So there are times when I'm in constant contact with partners and other times when we don't connect for a while. The bright side is that because I invested the time early on to build a solid foundation, folks usually understand and we function more like old friends than new ones.

How has your training in Hopkins influenced the way you approach service?

N/A – I wasn't trained at Hopkins

How does your service shape your development as a health care professional?

All service opportunities allow me to better understand people... the things they value, enjoy, fear, have overcome etc. It makes it easier to connect and see public health research as a tool to bridge the real life experiences people have with systematic methods to yield positive changes.

What advice do you have for prospective students who are interested in community service?

Be sure to have your priorities straight. Your full time job is student. Community service should enhance your experience as a student not take away from it. Find ways to connect what you are learning to the service opportunities and vice versa.

What would you say to someone who is unsure of the impact his/her service would have on a community?

Impact is a loaded word that takes a long time. Accept the honest truth that you may never fully know what your impact is and keep it pushing. Lead with good intentions. Check your biases at the door. Ask for and respond to feedback along the way.

What is the community service accomplishment that has affected you and/or your community the most?

I've helped one of my pastor pals start a safe space for young people in his community where there are video games, music food and supportive adults to talk to.

Final Comments

With privilege comes responsibility. We've been privileged to be a part of this network. It's now our responsibility to help others. Volunteering is one way to do that.



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