

SOURCE Champion of the Month
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"I find that you learn considerably more about your community by seeking out opportunities to volunteer in any capacity, whether it be tutoring, offering health screenings, or serving a meal at a shelter."

What do you do as your community engagement activity?

Pediatric Oncology Program: Students in Children's Life Experiences (POPSICLE- a pediatric oncology volunteer group), Taussig College community service chair, Charm City Clinic Screener

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

4-6 hours per week

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

I was involved in a similar pediatric oncology group as an undergraduate at Duke, and sought out a similar opportunity through POPSICLE. I began working with Charm City Clinic last year after hearing about the organization through upperclassmen.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?

As the service chair for Taussig, I've had the opportunity to volunteer as a dinner server at Weinberg Housing and Resource Center. By spending time at this organization, I've learned

about the social, medical, and legal challenges that contribute to homelessness in our community. Likewise, when volunteering at Charm City Clinic, I enjoy hearing the stories of clients who live in the neighborhoods surrounding Johns Hopkins. I have gained an understanding of the hurdles families face in accessing health care and health insurance.

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

One of the great things about the first two years of medical school is the flexibility of our schedules. I'm therefore able to routinely dedicate several afternoons and evenings to community service. Service is one of my priorities and helps to keep me grounded. Thus, I enjoy making time for volunteering.

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

Due to privacy issues when working with children or other vulnerable populations, there are a lot of training activities and prep work that must be completed before volunteering. Additionally, working with often very sick pediatric oncology patients poses many medical barriers that might prevent volunteers from establishing a predictable schedule.

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

During our first week of medical school, we took a course on health care disparities. Building on that foundational course, we have continued to learn about gender, racial, and socioeconomic disparities that affect all aspects of human health. This training has shaped my desire to serve populations who are not always treated fairly by medical institutions.

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

In addition to working with the homeless population, I have worked with uninsured, undocumented immigrants through an organization called Centro SOL. Both of these populations are underserved by traditional medical services. As a future health care provider, I hope to build a practice that is open and accessible to everyone in my community. My service work has also made me more sympathetic to people's situations that have left them homeless.

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

I would suggest that students find an organization that allows them to engage with the Baltimore community directly. As Hopkins students, we spend a lot of time in this small, protected bubble. I would advise students to learn about their community by listening to residents' stories.

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

Continuing from the previous question, listening to peoples' struggles and hearing their stories can be very therapeutic. Often health care providers don't have the time or take the time to hear the context of patients' lives. As students, we are in a privileged position to have so many opportunities to serve and engage with our community. Although we may not feel that we are fundamentally changing the community's infrastructure, we are influencing individual lives and people's impression or acceptance of health care providers.

