

SOURCE Champion of the Month
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“...create spaces that are inviting, nonjudgmental, and safe for people to share with us and build a skillset for empathetic listening.”

What do you do as your community engagement activity?

Mentoring and Charm City Clinic

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

Depends really; anywhere from 5-15 hours per week

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

I was connected with Charm City Clinic by hearing about them at SOURCE Service Fairs as well as attending their informational meetings. I started mentoring informally after meeting a couple of high school students working at a local café.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?

Life as a student can be a bit numbing sometimes, spending many days reading from computer screens or cramming your brain with an abundance of facts. The days that I was able to participate in community service were the days I felt most alive. Actively building relationships

with people, gaining an honorary aunt, uncle, or sister over time felt like one of the most valuable gifts I have ever received.

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

I think this is a personal challenge for me. I found myself having a hard time balancing the two spheres of my experience, one sphere consisted of building a foundation for a future skillset I hope to use in the future and the other consisted of a desire to be an active part of my community. Both spheres and motivations within them seemed incredibly disconnected sometimes and so each day, I would decide how I felt my time should be spent.

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

A big barrier or challenge related to my service has been recognizing that a lot of why we do what we do is because we exist in a system that is rigged. At Charm City Clinic as a case manager, I mostly worked to connect clients to health insurance, primary care, and other resources such as food and clothing for their families. As a mentor, I helped students study for the SAT and apply to college. I often felt as though neither of my roles should really need to exist. It should be easy for someone to access health care and it should be easy for someone to attend a school that prepares them for the SAT or to apply to college. My own frustration I was met with regarding my roles and their context ended up being something I had to find ways to cope with.

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

As medical student, I have learned why it is important for us as future care providers to: 1. create spaces that are inviting, nonjudgmental, and safe for people to share with us and 2. to build a skillset for empathetic listening. I think these two approaches are equally as valuable when engaging in service.

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

I hope that my engagement in service will continue to be a mode through which I learn about the challenges facing the communities I am a part of, so that I can serve as a thoughtful care provider and advocate.

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

Community service opportunities in Baltimore are forever flowing. There are many ways to engage in service. I would recommend first getting a handle on what you hope to learn and allow that to help guide how you devote your volunteered time.

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

I would say not to worry about impact and focus on relationship building. I think it is hard sometimes to rid our minds of how traditionally, especially in academic fields, we measure our sense of worth or accomplishment, but service is not really an opportunity to win or succeed in a set time, it is an opportunity to build understanding and relationships that will stay with you forever.

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

I was walking down the street one day and ran into one of my mentees moms. Two days before she watched her daughter walk across the stage at her high school graduation. We stopped and talked and her mom gestured to a laptop in her hand, saying it was for her daughter, a graduation/going to college present. She said she was so proud of her daughter for being the first in her family to go to college, but, she said, she always knew she could do it. Her mother's pride and confidence is something I will never forget.

Final Comments

Engaging in community service is an opportunity to challenge yourself, deepen your understanding, and build rich relationships...it is a study break you wouldn't regret.



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