

SOURCE Champion of the Month
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“Community service exposes me to the doers who inspire me and connects me with my community who motivate me.”

What do you do as your community engagement activity?

I am the student coordinator for the STAR site with the SOURCE HIV Counseling and Testing Program, for which I also serve as a HIV tester and counselor. I also tutor ESOL (English to speakers of other languages) with Esperanza Center.

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

14 hours/month

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

I’ve found out about these volunteer opportunities through word of mouth, followed by reading about them on SOURCE’s website. I contacted SOURCE to apply to work with the HIV Counseling program, and I directly reached out to Esperanza Center to find ways to participate in their work.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?

Community service energizes, surprises, challenges, and teaches me. Engaging in service reorients me when the pressures of school distort my priorities. Community service exposes me to the doers who inspire me and connects me with my community who motivate me. It continues to surprise me with new encounters and it challenges what I think I know.

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

Like many graduate students, this isn't my first rodeo. To summarize my dynamic coming-of-age: I've overcommitted, then under-committed, felt the loud void, and now I'm perfect at managing my schedule. That was a joke. But I've realized that service continually energizes and refines my ideas. Because of this, I commit to both weekly and monthly service and value it like any other commitment.

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

At this stage in my life (i.e. medical school [i.e. trying to stay afloat]), unfortunately I am choosy with extracurricular commitments like community service. This can feel limiting because Baltimore and Hopkins offer so many ways to participate in community service. Discerning which opportunities would be a good fit for my skills and interests honestly feels like a weird privilege. But it is a good skill to practice as I move forward in my professional training.

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

Since beginning medical school, the lens through which I see the world has begun to change. I've sharpened my questions and concerns regarding public health. The focused curriculum of medical school reminds me how valuable it is to engage in community service in different capacities beyond clinical work.

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

Community service informs my perspective as an individual and a young professional. Serving in community organizations provides me with opportunities to discover areas of interest, solidify my goals, and reflect on lessons I have learned. Without engaging in community service, I think I would be an incomplete health care professional. Service reveals the complex, diverse, vibrant lives that give meaning to our work in health care.

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

Yes! Build from your previous community service experience, explore new areas, and reflect on your motivations.

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

If you're unsure about the impact you would have, I think you're on the right track. It is appropriate to question our involvement in a community. How does the community perceive the

service? If you're unsure of the magnitude of your impact- why and how do you measure that? Some service work is rooted in investing in projects that are much bigger than our single contribution.

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

Serving as an English tutor at Esperanza Center slows me down and demands my full presence. Usually, I work one-on-one for two hours in the evening. Individuals share their stories with me and leave me with an incredible pressure. After tutoring with this curriculum for several semesters, I have my go-to objectives and feel aware of common struggles. But still, every person is different. Since acquiring a new language is less than straight-forward, some nights I feel great progress and others I doubt. This allows me to reflect on my effort and on how to best meet the needs of each student.

Final Comments

Through volunteering, we enrich our understanding of the world, challenge ourselves, and actively serve our community.



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