

SOURCE's Champion of the Month



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What do you do as your community engagement activity?

Esperanza Center ESL Volunteer Teacher and Clinic interpreter.

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

6 hours / week; ~30 hours / month.

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

I began work with the Esperanza Center after a visit to the clinic for Tuberculosis outreach with the tri-school organization *Bienestar*. Immediately after, I was impressed with the clinic services in addition to opportunities to engage the holistic health of immigrant populations through ESL lessons and conversation.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?

Community service has allowed a constant reaffirmation of why I entered the medical profession. With each service activity, I find deeper understanding of the complexities that contribute to health and wellbeing; with each person I meet through outreach, I gain unparalleled exposure to meaningful perspectives and life-changing, motivating,

attitudes. Moreover, through solidarity with the community, I further realize my place in it.

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

I find time for service through a mix of balancing school work and understanding my limits. By being honest with my schedule and commitments, I am able to determine (at least most of the time) what is reasonable to maintain a constant level of outreach in the community.

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

Service also poses barriers related to the intrinsic nature of resource shortages, systemic forces, and sobering realities that line the path to progress. More-so than any tangible barrier, the combination of these difficulties leaves one involved in service often questioning their abilities or doubting their purpose. For me, however, the optimism and constant reminder that we are driven not solely to “serve,” but to overcome *together*, transcends whatever temporary, often personal difficulties I find internally.

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

My short time as a student at Hopkins has afforded incomparable experiences and support in outreach that continually shape my career path. From course-work that embraces service learning to mentors that engage the community in their practice, from endless, vetted opportunities through SOURCE, to an equally impressive number of projects engaging communities around Baltimore and around the world- I’ve never felt such an ability, and as a result, obligation to serve responsibly, thoughtfully, and productively as I do now.

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

Through the aforementioned service activities I have gained a number of skills and experiences that I will never forget. Nonetheless, the greatest change that I have seen in my professional development has manifested in the increased desire to continue work in underserved communities, specifically, to focus my career path towards the greatest needs of the greatest number of people.

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

If you’re reading this, you’ve already proven that: you can compete in the classroom, you’re driven to improve the health of others, and your passion to combine care and collaboration is great enough to let it shape the rest of your life. As you consider community engagement, reflect on how your role depends on those around you;

don't forget the inevitable part you will play in ensuring the well-being of your community, above all, as a member of this community. Only through practice (and I'd argue, service) can you stay true to these unique, inspiring ideals.

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

If you're unsure of what impact your service is having, imagine- not the difficulties, unforeseeables, or doubts- but what impact you'll have if you *don't* serve. Odds are, you're making a greater difference than you can ever know- service is a thankless, often payless task, but if it were easy, it'd be done already.

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

The greatest general accomplishment that has continued to affect the Latino Immigrant community in which I work has been the gradual transformation of resources, support, and commitment that has taken place over the last few years in Baltimore City. As the greater Hopkins entity, community based organizations, and community members have joined forces, we have witnessed a dramatic increase in enthusiasm for embracing the fight for assured Latino health. Whether it's measured in the thousands of patients that have come to the Esperanza Center for primary care, or the creation of the *Centro para la Salud y Oportunidades de los Latinos* through Hopkins-Bayview, I feel lucky to be a part of the growing bond between Baltimore health providers and the Baltimore Latino community. Furthermore, work with *Bienestar* has solidified the role of Hopkins students in this evolution and needed provision of services; as I work to continue to ensure that our group's voice joins the conversation, I've come to rely and appreciate on my colleagues, mentors, and fellow volunteers that continue to fuel this change.

2. Any final comments or plugs to promote volunteerism? Feel free to plug an opportunity with your community engagement experience and how to get involved.

Regardless of your background, current career hopes, or future plans- don't ever be hesitant to challenge your beliefs. Service, unlike any other activity, will push you, will redefine your comfort zones, and will force you to consider the multifaceted context in which our health relates to that of our neighbors. If you don't believe me, come out to a Day of Service, visit SOURCE to see what outreach in Baltimore has to offer, and most of all, step outside of yourself and into the lives of others. For as put by the late Dr. Albert Schweitzer, [although] "Life becomes harder for us when we live for others... it also becomes richer and happier."