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What do you do as your community engagement activity?
I volunteer with Thread, Medical Education Resources Initiative for Teens (MERIT), and the Brotherhood Alliance for Science Education (BASE).

How much time do you spend on service per week/month?
I spend about 4 hours on service work per week.

How did you begin to work with your community-based organization (CBO)?
I began working with Thread, MERIT and BASE around January of 2014. After having finished Anatomy and Scientific Foundations of Medicine, I felt that I had spent enough time acclimating to medical school and Baltimore, and could now begin delving into community service work.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?
I really enjoy working with youth in various levels of their academic development. Through this, I learn a lot about the breadth of academic preparedness that is present in Baltimore city schools, and about areas where just a little bit of extra support could mean the world to a kid in high school.
How do you find time for service in your busy schedule?
With all that we have to do in medical school, I think it’s important to take time to do things that I enjoy. I really enjoy mentoring and tutoring kids, so taking a few hours out of my week to do those things is more of a treat than a task.

Besides finding the time, what barriers related to your service have you had to overcome?
One of the hardest parts of volunteering with high school kids is getting to know them. When I began each of my mentoring programs, it was quite difficult to break through the sometimes tough exterior that teenagers tend to put up. Though it was difficult, making that initial connection has been an essential part of each of the relationships that I have formed with my mentees.

How has your training in Hopkins influenced the way you approach service?
Hopkins provides an environment in which you can always look towards someone else to give you advice on how to approach a particular problem or road block when it comes to service. There are numerous individuals here, both students and staff, who have helped me to overcome challenges that I have faced, and shaped the way that I approach new challenges when they arise.

How does your service shape your development as a health care professional?
Service gives me a unique perspective on health care. It allows me to better see the patients that I interact with as a part of a community. Just as I must work with my mentee’s teachers and parents in order to ensure that his grades are ok, I must also work with a patient’s spouse or friends to make sure that we are most effectively tackling their health issues.

What advice do you have for prospective students who are interested in community service?
When deciding what opportunities in community service you want to pursue, be sure to talk to as many people as possible about the things that they do. It’s impossible to know exactly what each new community service experience will be like, but talking with individuals who are actively involved with service at Hopkins will give you a much better perspective than simply reading a flyer or an email.

What would you say to someone who is unsure of the impact his/her service would have on a community?
Just try it. Within a matter of minutes, hours, days, or weeks, the potential impact of his/her service will be apparent. This may be seen during a formal conversation with a mentee about his/her progress or a casual conversation with a mentee and his/her friends when you bump into each other around the city.
What is the community service accomplishment that has affected you and/or your community the most?
The accomplishment that has affected me the most was when our Thread student completed his summer internship at the school of public health and presented his work. We had been working for months to try and convince him to take a summer job. And after he agreed to work for the summer, we checked in on him every few days to make sure that everything was going well. When it was finally time for him to present his poster, he was extremely nervous, but he was able to present his work to several individuals, and even perused the poster session to glance at other projects that interested him.