

SOURCE Champion of the Month
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“Choose a service outlet or cause that you are really passionate about, do your research before you commit to make sure it is what you want, and then make it a priority.”

What do you do as your community engagement activity?

I help clients at Martha’s Place with job readiness, I work as a health screener at the Charm City Clinic, I coordinate volunteers with Healthcare for the Homeless Convalescent Care Center to lead weekly group sessions on health topics, I recruit volunteers for the BUGS afterschool program, and I am part of the curriculum planning team for MERIT’s summer program.

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

Around 12-14 hours per month

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

I heard about all of these organizations through emails that people sent to the med school lists, except the BUGS program which I got involved with through SOURCE as the Community Service Chair of Sabin College.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?

I really enjoy that community service allows me connect with people, and it is very rewarding to feel like I was able to make a difference for someone else. I especially love when I am able to apply the things I am learning in school to a real-world situation, whether it be teaching others

about healthy behaviors or empathizing with people that are different from me. It gives me a better perspective because I am reminded that it is worth the time spent studying when what I am learning in school can be used to help other people.

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

It's really hard! But I have to make it a priority to get out of the med school bubble and interact with people in the community. I just have to commit myself to it, and then it becomes a nice stress-reliever to focus my mind on something other than school for a bit. It's also easier to follow through with obligations when I feel like the people I am serving really enjoy having me there.

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

One barrier that I've come across is that poverty, homelessness, and drug abuse seem so entrenched in our society, especially in Baltimore, and that can make it really difficult to stay positive and hopeful that things can change. It also presents a challenge when the people in the community have lost their sense of hope and self-efficacy.

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

One of the main things that I have learned in med school so far is how to be a good listener, and that has helped shape the way I approach service or any other interaction with people. Also, my training in medicine gives me a more specialized knowledge, so I am able to share that knowledge with others and help them lead healthier lifestyles.

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

My experiences serving others have reminded me that med school is not just about learning a ton of facts, but about how to best care for people. It also gives me a better understanding of how a person's social situation and socioeconomic status can affect their well-being, including their health.

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

SOURCE does an excellent job of providing ample opportunities to serve others and connect with the community. It's hard to decide how to spend your time! You will feel tempted both to say yes to every opportunity that is presented to you and to say no to opportunities because you are overwhelmed by school work. My advice is to choose a service outlet or cause that you are really passionate about, do your research before you commit to make sure it is what you want, and then make it a priority.

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

A quote that comes to mind is "If you can't help everyone, then just help one person." I often feel like the need is so great in this city that I can't possibly make a difference. However, when I think about the individual people I have connected with, their gratitude and hope tells me that our experience together really was significant.

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

A really cool experience for me was the Mock Interview Night we had at Martha's Place to help the ladies practice their job interviewing skills. It was heart-warming to see the clients confidently present their positive attributes in a "professional" environment. Their attitudes had changed drastically from when I first met them, and I felt like they took the constructive criticism well and really started to believe in themselves.

Final Comments

If you like working with kids, you should volunteer with the BUGS afterschool program through Living Classrooms. Their farmer's market event is coming up on April 25th, and it is a great way to start getting involved! You can sign up at this link <http://vols.pt/9Vuqhh> and contact Rebekah Meyer (rlin@livingclassrooms.org) for more information.



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