SOURCE Champion of the Month
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“We have to remember that a community is made out of individuals who all need to thrive in order for the community as a whole to blossom. Help one person thrive and you’re helping the community.”

What do you do as your community engagement activity?
I am the President of the Geriatric Interest Group which is a group focused on promoting quality nursing care for older adults through education and service-learning events. I also work with the National Gerontological Nursing Association (NGNA).

How much time do you spend on service per week/month?
I spend about 30 hours per month coordinating events as President of the Geriatric Interest Group, working with the National Gerontological Nursing Association, and participating in events.

How did you begin to work with your community-based organization (CBO)?
I met Dr. Tanner, the faculty advisor for the Geriatric Interest Group, at the Accepted Students Day before I started the BSN program. She invited me to take part in Senior Prom, an event for low-income older adults that the group was hosting a couple weeks later, and I have been involved ever since.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?
Many low-income older adults do not have the opportunity or resources to reach a satisfying and fulfilling quality of life. I enjoy working with older adults because I can see the effect I have on their lives.
How do you find time for service in your busy schedule?
I have a tendency to get overwhelmed if I work on something for a long period. I try to rotate through the different assignments or commitments so that I am constantly being productive. I like to call it “productive procrastination”. It’s a very effective way to manage my commitments and find time for everything that I want to do.

Besides finding the time, what barriers related to your service have you had to overcome?
Nursing students across the U.S. are not aware of the differences in the presentation of illness between younger adults and older adults and therefore tend to ignore symptoms. There are few schools with standalone courses on aging so it is difficult to educate students on these differences. You can’t get students from all over the U.S. involved when they don’t realize that there’s a problem.

How has your training in Hopkins influenced the way you approach service?
Hopkins has trained me to look at the whole picture, not just one piece. It is impossible to understand why an older adult is failing to thrive unless all the factors are taken into account. Most of the Geriatric Interest Group service events are aimed towards improving the psychological side of health, which is a factor that is often not taken into account.

How does your service shape your development as a health care professional?
Helping older adults through the Geriatric Interest Group gives me the opportunity to see them at their best. It is difficult to only see older adults in a hospital setting because I tend to forget that there are older adults that can thrive in the community.

What advice do you have for prospective students who are interested in community service?
Starting this program can be overwhelming and it may seem like you don’t have time to do anything outside of schoolwork. It is incredibly important that you take the time to explore the Baltimore community because it helps you remember why you came to nursing school in the first place. Find something that speaks to you and go for it!

What would you say to someone who is unsure of the impact his/her service would have on a community?
It is amazing the difference you can make by just sitting and talking to someone about their life story. Each time you reach out to someone in the community you give them the opportunity to grow. We have to remember that a community is made out of individuals who all need to thrive in order for the community as a whole to blossom. Help one person thrive and you’re helping the community.

What is the community service accomplishment that has affected you and/or your community the most?
Dr. Tanner and I are working on a national initiative to reach out to students and promote education and involvement in the field of geriatrics. We recently were successful in formulating a plan with the NGNA to start this initiative. My career goal is to improve the care of older adults – this is the first step.
Final Comments
You can get involved with the Geriatric Interest Group by emailing me at mtrumbu1@jhu.edu. We host many events both at school and at low-income communities. We’ll be sending out our event schedule in mid-January with all of the opportunities to get involved.

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