SOURCE Champion of the Month
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Tim Whelden
Johns Hopkins School of Nursing
Master’s Entry into Nursing

“It’s important to remind yourself what you get out of your service— the fun, the lessons learned, the personal satisfaction – these things keep the fuel burning and keep you coming back.”

What do you do as your community engagement activity?
Student Assistant to the COP; Former COP participant at Joseph Richey House

How much time do you spend on service per week/month?
I was spending ~4 hrs/week at Joseph Richey House, but am currently employed as the COP assistant doing 2-8 hrs/week.

How did you begin to work with your community-based organization (CBO)?
When I was first getting to know Baltimore and JHU last Fall, I knew that I would want to be involved in the school’s relationship with the community. The Community Outreach Program seemed like a very positive, constructive way to do that, so I applied and received a posting at Joseph Richey House, an inpatient hospice center for Baltimore’s underserved. I’m very grateful that the COP was able to connect me with such an enriching community experience.

What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?
I enjoy learning about the variety of groups that are invariably at work in any community demonstrating hard work, resilience, and positivity in the face of challenge. And it’s fun making friends with people I wouldn’t otherwise come into contact with!

How do you find time for service in your busy schedule?
It’s important to remind yourself what you get out of your service— the fun, the lessons learned, the personal satisfaction – these things keep the fuel burning and keep you coming back.
Besides finding the time, what barriers related to your service have you had to overcome?
I always think that the biggest barriers come from our own internal attitudes and perceptions, like cynicism and laziness. It is easy to be overly skeptical and to criticize a situation from the outsider’s perspective, but it is far more difficult to get involved and learn for yourself what works or what doesn’t work and why. I think we should always be critical, but that shouldn’t get in the way of experiential learning.

How has your training in Hopkins influenced the way you approach service?
The Hopkins School of Nursing has helped me to think holistically about people and communities and to see their whole lives—not just their collections risk factors, diseases, and other challenges.

How does your service shape your development as a health care professional?
Taking part in service activities is one of the best ways to stay focused on the things I care about and remind myself why I got into healthcare in the first place.

What advice do you have for prospective students who are interested in community service?
Follow your interests and passions; study the history of the city and of the school in order to better understand the context in which you will work; assess the resources in the city—there are lots of organizations doing great work here that you can help out with, you don’t need to reinvent the wheel! Lastly, take advantage of great resources and the hard work of others - like SOURCE.

What would you say to someone who is unsure of the impact his/her service would have on a community?
You’re right to be critical— it is very possible and even likely that during your service work you will do harm. But how will you know how to do any better if you don’t get involved? Accept that you will make mistakes and get out there and meet people.

What is the community service accomplishment that has affected you and/or your community the most?
I spent a year with Community HealthCorps serving as the Health Resource Room Coordinator at Bread for the City, a non-profit in DC that offers comprehensive services to those in need. To avoid the risk of rambling, I’ll just say that the experience opened my eyes to the great things that are possible when people from various disciplines work together and I also had the pleasure of meeting many inspiring and wonderful clients whose stories still inspire me to keep working hard today.

SOURCE@jhu.edu
SOURCE.jhu.edu