



SOURCE

Star of the Month

April 2021

Razeen Karim
School of Medicine



Congratulations to our Star of the Month for April 2021, Razeen Karim from the School of Medicine! Razeen has been volunteering with the Men and Families Center, R.I.C.H. Foundation, and student groups at the School of Medicine to serve our community. We celebrate his tremendous commitment to service and collaboration with other medical students who are volunteering in Baltimore! Read our conversation with Razeen below to learn more about his experiences volunteering in our community.

Can you tell us about where you have been volunteering and how you became involved?

I became involved with in the community primarily through Baltimore CONNECT which is a network of multiple community organizations. Lindsay Hebert, who is their executive director, knows so much about what is going on in the community and she connected me to the Men and Families Center (MFC). For MFC, I helped distribute fresh produce boxes to the community, I helped set up for one of their flea markets, and I also helped clean up and organize their center.

In addition, Lindsay connected me to another organization called the R.I.C.H. foundation. Since they are a newer non-profit, I made useful documents for them such as a 1-page summary sheet and a community letter of support. I also helped out at one of their coat drives and distributed clothes to those in need. I helped the R.I.C.H. Foundation apply for a grant to reduce teen violence in Baltimore with the assistance of another medical student, Christina Ambrosino. We partnered with Prisons to Professionals (P2P) who was the lead organization. Christina and I also helped P2P build connections with other youth-focused

organizations such Youth Advocate Programs, Excellence and Ambition, and Community Law in Action.

Now, I am currently serving on the Baltimore CONNECT food subcommittee with a few other medical students, Emma Zeng, Isabella Florissi, and Shrey Kapoor. We have been reaching out to organizations to assess their needs. We are still in the startup phase, but we hope to engage in food-related advocacy and community projects.

I have also been trying to get involved with the Latinx community and serve as a co-community service chair for the Latinx Medical Student Association. I have helped people check in at a COVID testing site that primarily serves the Hispanic community. I have also worked with a medical student, Carolina Lopez-Silva, to try help MyChart enrollment. She helped create an instructional video on how to use the phone app and I helped notify Epic to update the Spanish MyChart FAQ. The next thing I am currently working on is trying to identify Hispanic homeless populations and meet their needs with the help of LMSA.

Going off of that, I have been trying to help the homeless population. Over Christmas break, a couple medical students (Shomari Sankara and Sarah Hill) and I frequently delivered food, handwarmers, gloves, clothes, and hygiene products to people living around Coppermine Du Burns Arena and St. Vincent de Paul Church. I have not been able to do this as frequently or elaborately since school started up, but I still manage to bring food and handwarmers to the people living at Coppermine every week or so. A separate group of medical students (Sam Hao and Ryan Nicholson) and I are now leading the medical student group engaging homelessness and we hope to do more for this population.

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How does your service shape your development as a health care professional? What do you enjoy about or gain through community service?

I want it to define my education at Johns Hopkins. I came into the field of healthcare because I wanted to make a difference for the most vulnerable. A majority of health is impacted by the social determinants of health, so going out in the community helps me understand the life context of those I plan to help in my career. That is why I am grateful to pursue a medical education in Baltimore because the city has a lot of pressing health inequities, but it also has a lot of amazing community members trying to make things better.

What I love about community service is that anyone can get involved regardless of your skills, profession, background, etc. All you really need to make a difference is a good heart and some determination! Community service has been enjoyable to me because it teaches me so much about people's day-to-day struggles. It really puts things in perspective and makes me appreciate the little things in life.

How has volunteering alongside your classmates helped you shape community at the School of Medicine?

Volunteering has allowed me to really get to know some of my classmates. They have pretty interesting backgrounds and experiences so it's always great to get to learn from them. Also, I honestly could not do a lot of the work I do without them. It always takes a team effort so I'm really glad

to have classmates that are invested in serving the community.

What would you say to other students who are interested in getting involved but may not know where to start or if they are not able to make the time?

Along with the SOURCE Weekly Service Scoop, I would check out Baltimore CONNECT! They are a growing collaborative network of community, faith-based, and neighborhood organizations that meets every week. There's a variety of opportunities to get involved in from grant writing to volunteer events to program development. Reach out to Lindsay Hebert (lhebert3@jhmi.edu) and she can get you connected to potential opportunities based on your interests! If you are interested in any of the work I do, you can also reach out to me (rkarim2@jh.edu) and I can help get you involved too!

My advice to busy students is to find a service opportunity that you are passionate about. It's a simple piece of advice but it makes all the difference. It can sometimes get exhausting and stressful trying to manage schoolwork so it's really important that you get involved with community service that energizes you. When I am able to do that, I find myself studying harder and managing my time better because it means I can spend more time trying to make a difference in my community.

Thank you for your incredible commitment to Baltimore and everything you do to serve our community!