Congratulations to our Star of the Month for May 2021, Suzanne Pye from the School of Nursing! Suzanne worked with SquashWise in the JHSON 2020-2021 Community Outreach Program as the Nutrition and Healthy Habits Lead for middle school students. This position involved teaching lessons on specific nutrition topics such as choosing healthy snacks, the digestive system, and the importance of hydration, among other fundamental lessons. Read our interview with Suzanne below to learn more about her experience with SquashWise!

What made you want to volunteer with the Community Outreach Program and SquashWise?

I was interested in volunteering with the Community Outreach Program because I saw it as a great way to get involved and familiarize myself with the Baltimore community. As I am from California, I saw this opportunity to get to know local organizations. I specifically chose to work with SquashWise because nutrition, athletics and education is extremely important to me personally. I feel that SquashWise aligns with my personal beliefs and allows me to practice my education and teaching skills.

What has volunteering been like during COVID? Especially with a program that was intended to be completely physical and in-person?

Volunteering during COVID has included lots of Zoom! As my position with SquashWise includes teaching students about nutrition, weekly tasks include presenting to students about different nutrition topics and how nutrition can affect their athletic/educational performance. Teaching students on Zoom required talking to a lot of black boxes!

Has participating in service-learning helped your transition to living in Baltimore and starting graduate school?

Participating in service learning has 100% helped with my move to Baltimore. When I first moved to Baltimore, most of our classes were online with few opportunities to meet people. My position with SquashWise gave me purpose in starting my graduate school experience and helped me find meaningful connections in my community through my experiences teaching students.

How do you view your work at Squash Wise as part of your goals of becoming a healthcare professional?

My work at SquashWise has helped me tremendously with patient education. The students I teach at SquashWise are in middle school and do not have a prior knowledge of nutrition, which influences the lessons I make. Learning how to provide quality education has been a big part of my role at SquashWise. This will stay with me throughout my time as a student at Hopkins and into my future as a nurse.

What advice would you give to other students looking to get involved in service-learning?

My biggest piece of advice to other students is to DO IT!! Service learning through the COP program has given me purpose and passion in my nursing school journey and I would recommend it to anyone.

Thank you for your service to our communities and for equipping Baltimore youth with key health knowledge!