Congratulations to our Star of the Month for May 2022, Emily Huang from the School of Medicine! Emily is a SOURCE Service Scholar and has been working with our amazing community partners at Lori’s Hands to ensure consistent and sustainable recruitment of volunteers who are supporting Baltimoreans living with chronic illness. We spoke to Emily about her experience in the SOURCE Service Scholars program. Read more below!

Tell us a little bit about yourself. What degree program are you enrolled in? What brought you to Hopkins and the School of Medicine?

I am currently a first-year medical student at Hopkins. I decided to pursue medicine because I hope to be a conduit for scientific discoveries and patient care while also engaging in patient advocacy. What brought me to Hopkins was the opportunity to be mentored by the dedicated faculty here and the ability to work with the diverse patient population in Baltimore.

What made you want to get involved with Lori’s Hands and the SOURCE Service Scholars program? Can you tell us a little bit about the work you are doing?

I think there is a lot of value in developing longitudinal relationships with members within the community. I have enjoyed learning from and engaging with community members living with chronic illnesses through prior volunteering experiences. When I initially heard about Lori’s Hands through the SOURCE Service Scholars program, I was excited to apply and to become more involved with the Baltimore community! Lori’s Hands is a volunteer organization that builds mutually beneficial partnerships between community members with chronic illness and college/graduate students. Volunteers provide practical assistance to support community members’ independence at home, and community members share their health and life experiences to support students’ learning. I am currently working with Lori’s Hands to recruit more undergraduate/graduate volunteers for the Baltimore chapter that has recently opened in the past year. My main responsibilities are to increase awareness of volunteer opportunities offered by Lori’s Hands and develop long-term collaboration with community service centers to ensure recruitment sustainability. Through outreach efforts this year, we recruited 38 students to volunteer with us and recorded a total of 551 volunteer hours since August!

What has your experience been like connecting with community members during the pandemic? Can you tell us about other service opportunities you have participated in?

Connecting with community members has been challenging during the pandemic. As expected,
email communications for community outreach were slow. We also could not participate in any in-person recruitment events such as classroom presentation or tabling. However, the team has been very flexible by transitioning to virtual volunteering with iPads and pivoting to classroom presentations on Zoom.

Besides Lori’s Hands, I have been involved with mentoring pre-Med students at Morgan State University through the MATCH program and tutoring math to elementary school students at Commodore John Rogers. I have also volunteered with calling EBMC patients to help schedule COVID-19 vaccines/boosters online.

What service activities do you have planned in the future? Are there any activities where others can get involved?

We are always looking for more volunteers with Lori’s Hands! Virtual and in-person opportunities are available. More information can be found on the Lori’s Hands website. In addition to weekly volunteering, we welcome collaboration with student groups on one-day service events. Past events have included block clean-up or writing birthday cards! If you would like to get more involved, feel free to reach out to me (yhuan211@jhmi.edu).

How does your community work complement what you’re learning in the classroom at the School of Medicine?

My work with Lori’s Hands opened my eyes to the diverse range of experience from community members living with chronic illness. This has helped humanize a lot of the scientific information we are learning about chronic illness in class. In a way, community service helps me stay grounded and enrich my understanding of illnesses by approaching it from a patient centered perspective.

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

My biggest advice is to stay in the loop with volunteer opportunities offered through SOURCE. The weekly newsletter has a variety of one-time and longitudinal volunteer opportunities for students looking for different time commitments. If you ask around, there are a lot of classmates involved in community service or with specific organizations. They might also serve as a great source of referral!

Thank you for your service to our community!