



SOURCE

Star of the Month October 2019

Mary Lavery
School of Nursing
Master of Nursing Science Student, Class of 2020



What community engagement activities or programs have you been involved with? How did you begin to work with community-based organizations (CBOs) in Baltimore?

Most of the community engagement that I do involves working with children. When I first arrived to Baltimore, I got involved at a local school called the Commodore John Rodgers Elementary and Middle School (CJR) as a “reading buddy,” math tutor, and ESOL assistant, thanks to a recruitment email from SOURCE! I loved being involved, and this year I decided to take on a role working as the CJR representative for the School of Nursing. This has allowed me to recruit other volunteers for CJR, and plan community engagement events with students from the School of Medicine and the School of Public Health. Additionally, I just began my first season as an assistant soccer coach at CJR for the girl’s team.

Last year, I engaged in SOURCE’s Community Outreach Program (COP) and taught health lessons at the Henderson-Hopkins School with fellow nursing students. I also had the opportunity to be an intern at the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative as a part of SOURCE’s Baltimore Action Projects. I worked with the team that conducted home visits for children with high rates of emergency department visits due to asthma. Additionally, I completed the training through the School of Nursing to become a Birth Companion and support mothers before, during, and after birth.

How do you find time for service in your busy schedule? How much time do you spend on service per week/month?

Working with the children and the community brings me so much happiness that I have really tried to prioritize it. It motivates me to finish all my studying and work. Each week, I spend about two to three tutoring at the school. The soccer team meets Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays for an hour and a half. Weekly, the time spent coordinating the volunteers and planning community events varies. When added up, I would estimate that I spend about 8 hours volunteering each week.

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

By working with the children in the community I have learned many things that I would not be able to learn in the class or clinical setting. It has allowed me to get a better understanding of how people’s lives outside the hospital can influence their health. As a nursing student and nurse technician in the Emergency department, I typically do not have much of a chance to get to know patients.

It was particularly interesting to work for the Green and Health Homes asthma home evaluation program prior to starting work in the emergency department. It made more aware of what effective care looks like for patients. From the clinical side, we learn to treat the symptoms and send the patient on their way. From the community, I have learned that until we address the home environment, air quality, and other factors, patients will keep struggling with their illnesses. Moving forward, this has inspired me to adapt a more thorough approach when working with patients. I am

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more conscientious about promoting preventative health and educating myself on local resources for patients. Beyond enhancing my career in healthcare, community service has been the highlight of my time in Baltimore. I enjoy having the chance to do something that I love, and see the impact that it makes on the children in the community.

What advice do you have for prospective students who are interested in community service? What would you say to someone who is unsure of the impact his/her service would have on a community?

I would recommend that prospective students identify a cause that interests them and find the organization in Baltimore that supports it. SOURCE is a perfect place to start since they already have numerous connections around Baltimore. Also, for students just beginning to serve with an organization, keep in mind that it is okay to spend a few visits just getting to know what the organization is about. Be open to the needs and goals of the organization when thinking about the skills you have to offer.

For those that are unsure of their impact, just know that you may not always see the impact right away. One summer I volunteered to teach two immigrant students English in order

to prepare them for school. I loved working with them, but felt like we had not accomplished enough to make an impact on their academics. Later that year, I received a letter in English from each student saying how much better school was for them, thanks to the preparation we did over the summer. With volunteering, you do not always see immediate results, and sometimes you will not realize the impact that you have on others, but it is worth it.

Any final comments or plugs to promote volunteerism? Feel free to plug an opportunity with a CBO you work with and let others know how to get involved!

There are always plenty of opportunities at the Commodore John Rodgers School. It is a fun and volunteer-friendly place to be, and it is a short walk from the Schools of Nursing and Public Health. Volunteers can help with reading, math, language support, Hungry Harvest Farmer's Market, or after school activities. I have never walked out without a smile on my face! Feel free to email me at mlavery3@jhu.edu if you would like to be involved.

Thank you, Mary, for your service to our community and for connecting Nursing students with CJR School!



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