



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

**“Community Service”
by Ethan Bogard
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As part of my bar mitzvah preparation, I had the opportunity to become involved in two projects intended to exemplify the values of tzedakah (charity) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). One aspect of becoming a bar mitzvah is beginning to take on responsibility for making the world a better place. Performing community service has allowed me to begin putting these important values into action.

The first step of community service was trying to figure out what community service was realistic, and how and when I could possibly fit this into my crazy life! Living in the suburbs and having working parents only made it more difficult. My thought was that if I could become involved in something in my school, I could try to help kids and do it locally. Since math is my best subject, and I’ve been involved in a program called Math Olympiads, I thought there might be some opportunity there. The teacher coordinating that program arranged for me to work after school with 6th graders who were having difficulty with math and needed extra help. This was a lot of fun and satisfying because it taught me that I had an important skill that I could use to help others. I also learned a lot about how to work with kids younger than me and how to be patient with people. I did this for several weeks this past spring.

I also wanted to find a way to combine my passion for tennis with my efforts to perform community service. I talked to one of the tennis pros at the local club and we worked out an arrangement that I would work with him to help teach some of his younger, less experienced students. The way it worked was that I taught for a few hours each week and was paid for my work. I then turned around and donated all (yes, all!) of the money I earned to the USTA Tennis and Education Foundation. This foundation uses tennis as a means to help disadvantaged kids, and those with disabilities. It also uses tennis as a vehicle to help kids finish high school and qualify for college scholarships. With the money I earned teaching tennis, and another fundraising effort I conducted, I was able to donate 150 dollars to the foundation. It was a lot of fun to work with the kids and actually get paid for playing and teaching. I picked this foundation because of my love for tennis and because I realize how fortunate I am to have parents who can sponsor my lessons and trips to tournaments. Many kids do not have those opportunities.

Finally, in keeping with the principles of Humanistic Judaism and my own values, I am very proud to announce that I will be donating 10% of any gifts that I may receive today to the Innocence Project, which I spoke about during my presentation about Barry Scheck. It seemed only natural that I would put my money (well sort of my money) to such a great cause that I learned about through my Bar Mitzvah preparation. Actually, since Mr. Scheck was so generous with his time with me and the Innocence Project is so important, it’s kind of cool that I can do something to support his great work.