



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“Community Service”

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When I started planning my community service project, I wanted to work with animals. I contacted several vets and shelters, but I wasn't old enough to work with animals. This made me think further, and I came up with an idea that involves Children's Village.

In 1851, Children's Village was founded. It is a residential school for boys located in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Children's Village houses the boys in cottages. 11-15 boys live in each cottage. All different ages of boys live there. Children's Village treats boys who are “victims of abuse, chronic neglect, or whose conduct is either self-destructive or dangerous and beyond the control of loving parents.”

Last Chanukah, my cousins and I chose to forgo some presents and use the money to buy a ping pong table for a cottage at Children's Village. When my cousins and I delivered the table, we had an ice cream sundae party, and then played for a while. The playing was fun. I felt happy that the boys got to play with something they couldn't afford and have fun. I felt proud that I used the money for kids that can't live with their families. This year, we donated 2 Playstation 2's and some games for them.

I e-mailed the director of volunteer services at Children's Village and asked her if there was anything particular that the kids wanted or needed. She said that the kids needed videos because they don't have that many, and the ones they have belong to certain cottages instead of a library for all of the cottages. Videos are so important to all of the kids because they have a lot of free time, but not much to do during it. Videos would give them the opportunity to see movies they never saw before and occupy some of their free time. It also helps them to clear their minds, or temporarily escape the world they live in.

I decided to have a video drive for them. I wrote a letter to all the kids' families in the elementary schools in my town and the City Congregation. I then had the help of my family in addressing, stuffing, stamping, and sending about 700 envelopes. My mentor and I made a sheet that would keep track of the people who called and when I would pick up the videos they wanted to donate. My mom would drive me after school to people's houses to pick up their videos. Sometimes, people would drop the videos off at my house. I then stored the videos in the living room. There were so many videos, that my dad couldn't get to the couch without jumping. I also got VCR's, DVD players, and a TV!

When I started, I predicted that I would collect around 100-200 videos. But fortunately, I was wrong. I managed to collect 565 videos and DVD's, 12 computer games, 7 VCR's, 2 DVD players, and 1 TV! Surprisingly, I also got a fax machine and a microwave!

On January 31st, I dropped off the collection at Children's Village. A few staff and my mom helped me unload the videos and put them on carts. Then, we rolled them into the elevator and put them with other things donated by other people. They will sort out the videos and then divide them among the different cottages.

On February 10th, I went to Children's Village to have a Movie Day with one of the cottages. I thought that the kids were going to watch a few movies, eat popcorn and ice cream, and have fun. Unfortunately, a church group was mistakenly scheduled to be there at the same time, and they got the attention of most of the kids. They were making valentines and reading stories. A few kids stayed with us and watched Sponge Bob episodes the whole time. At first, I was excited to be having a movie day, but it was very disappointing and dull at the end. On the way home, I realized that this wasn't about me, it was about them. At least they now have new movies to watch and had a fun and different kind of Sunday afternoon.

I would recommend this kind of collection for other kids because they would also be helping kids in need. I would do it again because it's for the good of lonely children. I got a lot of feeling out of it, a loving and kind feeling.

Another community service task that I did involved Tikkun Olam, or bettering the world. In April of 2004, I went to Washington, D.C. for the Reproductive Rights March. I marched with my mom, dad, sister, great aunt, great uncle, grandmother, and 900,000 other people. It was very crowded but I liked yelling and carrying signs. I feel that women should not be forced to have babies that they don't want. I believe that it is important for women to have control over their bodies. I would recommend marching to other people and I would do it again. When large numbers of people participate, it can make a big impact. Going to the march made me think a lot more about this topic, and develop my own ideas about the beginning of life. This was my first opportunity to participate in influencing our government.

When I receive the money I get as gifts, I will donate 15% of it to 3 different places. One is the Amyloidosis Support Network. My Grandpa died of Amyloidosis type 1, a rare and little understood disease. Amyloidosis is a disease that makes an abnormal protein that the body cannot break down. There are 4 types. Type 1 is the most common.

Another place I will donate to is Children's Village, which you all know about by now. Lastly, I will donate to the Pediatric Cancer Foundation, a foundation that promotes research on the treatment of pediatric cancers. I am donating here because there is a girl at my school who fought off bone cancer. She is raising money for them, and I want to help her.