



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“Community Service”

by James Ryan

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As a part of the Bar Mitzvah process, the students at City Congregation are required to do community service to help out those who are in need of assistance. I considered several ways to help out people, and I chose to help causes that were the most important to me.

One of these causes was the AIDS Walk. I originally started participating at the age of nine when I was approached by Rolando Alvarez, a fourth-grade teacher at my elementary school. He asked me and my family to join P.S. 163's walking team, and we joined other teachers, students, and alumni in raising money to help fund research for a cure for AIDS. Originally I had not been enthusiastic about walking, because I did not understand how important it was to find a cure for this devastating disease. I soon learned that in addition to being quite a bit of fun, the walk helped me to understand the daily struggles of those who live with HIV and AIDS and how important it is to try and find a cure. I have been doing the walk ever since.

Walking with thousands of others and hearing the stories of those who live with HIV and AIDS and those who have had it and are now symptom free with medication management helped to show me just how important it is to find a cure. By finding a cure, we can save millions of lives every year worldwide.

In addition to the AIDS Walk, I have also helped out at P.S.163 to set up classrooms before school started. In addition to helping Mr. Alvarez work on his classroom, I was able to run errands for other teachers, deliver memos for the office, and do tasks that helped to make the classrooms ready to have students learning on the very first day of school. I have always believed that education is very important, so helping to set up classrooms seemed like something worthwhile for me to do. This helped me to understand how important it is to educate my generation and generations to come, as we are the future generations who will eventually be trusted with running the world. Through education, we are able to prepare ourselves for the real world, and help ourselves understand that what we need to know for the life ahead begins in the classroom.

Also, I have helped out at fundraisers for my current school, The Computer School. By helping to sell items at the bake sale on Election Day, I was able to raise money to pay for expenses such as new computers, new textbooks, and a supplement to federal funding. The school really needed the money, and helping to sell items at the sale was an effective way to help. I learned that just by doing small things, anybody can help to make a big difference.

Finally, I have helped out at the Manhattan JCC as part of the National Day of Service. This year, I volunteered to tie-dye pillowcases for children in hospitals in Israel. I thought this was a great way to help because these children were much less fortunate than I, and I thought they could use all of the help that they could get. This was a fun and productive way to help children in need, in a way that

was more direct and personal than simply donating money. I have always been in support of helping those whose needs were greater than mine, and this was a good way to help that cause.

In conclusion, whether helping to raise money to find a cure for HIV and AIDS, helping to educate future generations, or helping children who are less fortunate, through my community service I have realized that I am very lucky to be in a position to help others, and that I should always do my best to help people through *tikkun olam*, or bettering the world.

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