



*Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students*

**“Community Service”**

**by Kaela Walker**

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Community service means a lot of things to me. It can mean helping people out individually, or participating in an important cause. It doesn't matter who you are helping; what matters is that you *are* helping someone. Community service is essential. Without it, communities would not be good places to live. Foundations or charities would not be successful. Animals at shelters would not get enough exercise, attention or care. Teachers would not get all of their work done, and then students wouldn't learn as much. Plus community service is a way to bring people together who would not typically know each other.

During the school year, I participate in many activities to help out the communities that I am a part of. During the summer, I swam laps to raise money for a charity that helps kids attend camp who cannot afford it. Each week at camp, I swam laps to raise money.

In the Fall, I visited an animal shelter in Brooklyn called BARC where abandoned or abused dogs are rescued. My mom and I walked dogs. The dogs seemed eager and happy to be outside and have freedom and exercise. However, it was a challenge when we took a turn with a big, strong, crazy pit bull puppy named Douglas; Douglas ended up walking us, rather than the other way around!

I also ran the Fun Run in Central Park to raise money for the Ronald McDonald house, a charity that helps children. And most importantly, I help out my teachers after school. This gives the teachers time to get their work done while I take care of the administrative stuff. This lets my teachers focus on helping kids learn.

While all of these projects are worthwhile, I feel helping out at school is the most important community service I do. This is because public school funding is limited; teachers in my middle school have large classes and a lot of students. The classes can have up to 35 kids, and teachers are responsible for 4 to 5 classes. This means that there is not a lot of time for teachers to plan and come up with new ideas or ways of teaching. When kids help out, teachers can focus on what matters most: teaching kids.

I stay after school for a few hours each week and do whatever the teachers ask. I like doing community service at school because I can be with my friends at the same time I'm helping others. Even in elementary school, my mom reminded me, I liked to lend a hand to new teachers. I showed them where things were and helped set up the classroom, jobs most kids wouldn't want. Now, I help my teachers in lots of different ways. I bring in supplies like paper towels, tissues, paper, and markers. My science teacher, Ms. Ramos, asks me to hang up projects and homework around the classroom. This shows off the students' brilliant work. I also post up words we have learned or examples of what we have done in class. This allows kids to check the wall and in case they are confused or have questions. Since Ms. Ramos has *a lot* of students (200 kids), I also grade homework or enter the grades into her computer (not for my own class, of course).

For my 6<sup>th</sup> grade humanities teacher, Ms. Cooper, I arranged the bookcase, organized class work papers, and kept track of money for field trips, making sure everyone was able to participate. All this indirectly helps kids learn, and that's what my community service is all about.

I also plan to donate ten percent of the money I receive for my bat mitzvah to the Marine Mammal Rescue Center in Marin County, California. Last summer I visited this facility where they nurse sick and injured marine mammals back to health and then release them into the ocean. While we were there, we saw sick seals, sea lions and elephant seals. I felt bad that these animals were in this type of condition, but happy at the same time because I knew they were in good hands. This Marine Mammal Rescue Center operates purely on donations, and it is important to me to help out.

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