



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“Community Service”

by Rebecca Goldin

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People work at community service with many different attitudes and accomplish their goals in different ways. Service can be seen as a serious obligation, as a part of your values. It can be done for the fun of helping people and causes. It can be practiced just because it is something that you have always done. It can be a money raiser or working with organizations first hand. I believe that in each case you should help the causes you truly feel are most important. This way your work will be passionate and not a boring task. I have helped to raise money by walking in charity walks as well as using my artistic abilities and selling things that I have made. I have donated my hair to Locks of Love, an organization that provides wigs for children who have lost their hair due to chemotherapy. I have also written letters to imprisoned writers, knitted hats for premature babies, made tie-died pillowcases for a children’s hospital in Israel, decorated bandanas for dogs who were in need of homes, wrote birthday cards for the elderly, made scarves for the homeless, and walked dogs in a shelter in Rhode Island.

Much of the community service I have done was with my family. I have been in the Breast Cancer Walk, the Celiac Walk, and the Aids Walk. Like most charity work sponsor walks help to donate money to a cause. You get your friends and family to sponsor you and in return you walk in the event. Although walking is not the most exciting thing that could happen it is a time of being outside and with your community, all marching together united for the same cause. It also educates and demonstrates to passers by that this cause is important to many people.

I have also raised money on my own without my family or a large group. On Earth Day a couple of years ago I raised over \$200 by selling jewelry that I had made. With the money I raised I adopted an acre of rainforest in Costa Rica. I felt proud that my art could make a difference in the world and that it saved a whole acre of trees and wildlife. I feel that my act of responsibility showed people the way. The next Earth Day there were more kids raising money for causes at my school.

In addition to raising money for causes I have also worked more directly to help communities. When I was younger I would just do whatever service the family was doing. The earliest community service we did was when I was three years old and our family went to Cuba. My parents tell me that there were no books in the school that we visited and that each child would be given only one pencil to last until it was completely used up. We brought lots and lots of school supplies to help the children. A few years later our family went to the Martin Luther King High School in New York to make scarves and cards. Another time my mother and I went to a fundraiser for the ASPCA. We made bandanas for dogs and bought raffle tickets to support the group. We had such a good time that when we left the event we handed out a few flyers to attract others to join in. At other times our family has donated used children’s books, toys, and clothing.

Now that I am older I can choose what I feel is meaningful and important. At the JCC this past Martin Luther King Day, I chose to decorate pillowcases for a children's hospital in Israel. I drew teddy bears to cheer the kids up and wrote them notes so they would not feel alone. Most recently I have worked with the PEN Center to promote freedom of speech. PEN was founded in 1921 and is the world's oldest international literary and human rights organization. I wrote to imprisoned writers and learned about their circumstances. We wrote to people from all around the world. The representative from the organization told us that the writers most likely would not be able to write back. Sometimes our letters would not be allowed to go to the writer at all but would be sent to their families. Working with the PEN organization I realized that freedom of speech is something I take for granted and it can be hard to keep your opinions to yourself. I think that there are some very brave people in the world and I was proud to help support them.

The causes closest to my heart have to do with the environment. I find it easier to relate to environmental causes than causes for social justice. The environment is not more important than social justice, but I feel that I understand the problems and solutions better. I have learned about pollution, greenhouse gasses, CFCs, and global climate change and I can see how they affect all of us on the planet. Therefore I plan on donating a portion of my BM gifts to several environmental causes.

When you think of community service, most people think of a boring task, an obligation, and guilt. It doesn't have to be that way. You can do community service the way that you want to and help the things that you see are most important.

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