



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“Community Service”

by Sam Botwin

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Community is another important value to me. I am a member of many communities; one I am very involved in is my school community. Throughout my eight years at BFS I have been involved in many community services projects; I also have had the opportunity to be involved in outside community service projects with my family.

The Brooklyn Friends Community Dinner, which is a charitable dinner for the homeless, takes place the last Sunday of every month. My family and I have been volunteering since I have been in the first grade. We spend two hours setting up tables, cutting bread and buttering bagels. After that we serve food to the guests, I talked to them and treat them with kindness and respect. This is something I enjoy doing with my family and it makes me feel good to help other people.

The second project was helping to clean up the Quaker cemetery that is in the middle of Prospect Park. My mom and I went as part of an annual Brooklyn Friends School (BFS) community service event. BFS is a Quaker school and every year the student, faculty, along with members of the Quaker community go to this cemetery and clean up the leaves and the garbage. When we first arrived, we were met by the Sexton of the Cemetery and he put us to work immediately. We were given rakes and were told to go up the hill to the grave sites. My Mom and I along with between 100 and 150 people spent the better part of a Saturday raking, planting and cleaning up the cemetery. My experience at the cemetery was great. I had never been there before but I had heard a lot about it. I thought this would be a good start for my community service project for my Bar Mitzvah, because I belong to the Quaker community at school. While we were cleaning the tombstones, I was also looking at all the names of the people buried in the cemetery. Many of the people lived over 200 years ago. Even though we were in a cemetery for hours doing hard work everyone was happy to be there. At lunchtime everyone gathered around for a moment of silence to be thankful and reflect on the day. This is a Quaker practice. After we finished we went on a tour to see some of the famous people buried there. One famous person that was buried there was Mary McDowell. She was a Quaker teacher that did not support fighting and war, she believed in non-violent conflict resolution I respect her choices and hope that I can always do the same by standing up for what I believe in.

The third project was working with my old fourth grade teacher, Bea Bartolotta. I would go to her classroom after school twice a week for 2 hours. My job was to help Bea with various projects for her class. I would help prepare her classroom for the next day by either organizing her students reading logs or making sure there were supplies for the kids for the next day. Sometimes she would have me grade her students spelling quizzes. I felt really good helping Bea, who is a family friend as well as being one of my favorite teachers. I really have a new appreciation for teachers by helping her prepare for teaching her kids. I never realized how many hours teachers prepared for their students outside of the school day. She is truly a dedicated teacher. Doing community service makes me feel good but helping a friend makes me feel better.

My final project was working with my 7th grade math teacher Marna Herrity. Some of my fellow classmates and I helped her hang artwork in the Quaker meeting House. The artwork was from both students in our sister school in Tanzania, Africa and from BFS.. The pictures were part of an exchange between our 12th grade and their entire school. I spent about 2 hours in our meetinghouse putting up the drawing and painting to make the beautiful exhibit that student, parents and teachers got to see. I felt really good about what I did.

Even though this community services was required for my Bar-Mitzvah I still would have done it anyway, because it was the right thing to do and It made me feel good doing it. I will continue to do community service at my Bar-Mitzvah is over because it is something that I feel strongly about.

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