

Since I was young enough to understand the word, I have considered myself an empath. Since the very first time my parents took me into the city and I became aware that not all people have three meals on their table every day and a roof over their head, I haven't been able to let it go. Although, as a kid, I didn't understand why we couldn't give what we had to every person we passed sitting on the street, as I have grown, I have found ways to do this to the best of my ability.

Since I arrived at Holy Child in seventh grade, I have noticed that service is one of the foundational principles of the school. Because of this commitment to service, I have had the opportunity to participate in many efforts to better our local community. However, feeding the hungry has always been what called me most. As a middle schooler, I was able to participate in the Midnight Run and raise money and donations, while focusing on “the encounter,” as emphasized by Pope Francis, with the homeless people we were feeding. The Midnight Run helped me realize that I could start making an impact on people's lives right now and that I don't have to wait until I get older to give back. This experience showed me exactly what I wanted to do: Combine my leadership skills and passion for service to change my community.

In the summer going into my freshman year, I founded my chapter of Feeding 500. Feeding 500 is a student-run nonprofit organization in Fairfield and Westchester counties that raises money and collects food donations that go directly to supporting local nonprofits; the organization has raised over \$235,000 to date. I started the Larchmont branch, which works solely to support Hope Community Services of New Rochelle. I founded Feeding 500 in Larchmont with one goal in mind: To help feed as many people in my community as possible, with the help of my friends, family and my school community. In the past three years, I have devoted over 140 hours to building and maintaining my Feeding 500 chapter, which has hosted countless bake sales, food drives, and larger-scale annual fundraisers, all in support of Hope. I have been lucky enough to form a team of dedicated volunteers and make connections within Hope to make an impact on those around me.

My experience with Feeding 500 has shown me that a group of students and a mission is more than enough to promote change. It is never “too early” and nobody is “too young;” the only thing in people's way of making a difference is themselves. I am so grateful to have learned this lesson at such a young age, and I plan to continue to do my best to give back to my community, wherever and whenever I can.

