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The Heart Of The Neighborhood

If you had told me three years ago that I'd spend 253 hours of my free time essentially "at work" without a paycheck, I probably wouldn't have believed you. But those hours didn't happen all at once; they happened in the small, chaotic moments like the high fives after a rough swim lesson at the Boys and Girls Club or the quiet early mornings setting up for coffee and bagel hour. What started as a way to fill a resume quickly shifted into something else entirely. Those 253 hours represent more than just a number on a log sheet; they represent the realization that showing up for your community is where the real growth actually begins.

The Boys and Girls Club of Northern Westchester has become a place that feels like home. I've been a competitive swimmer there for years, and that's really what started my journey. Transitioning from being an athlete to a leader was often a challenge. Trying to keep twenty-five first-graders on track while moving from art class to the pool was basically chaos, but we always get the job done. Meeting the parents and getting to know the people in my community was one of the better highlights of my experience. While there I spent eight weeks navigating challenges with six-year-olds, learning leadership skills in the morning and applying them to our activities in the afternoon. I've realized that as a person, I want to help my community in any way possible because I've learned that when you have your community's back, they have yours too.

Saint Francis of Assisi has also been a huge part of my life. I've been going there for years, from Sunday mass to my Tuesday night classes. The community there is relaxed but structured, making sure we understand how faith impacts the greater world. At church, I've learned how to communicate, how to be respectful, and how to see the greater good in everyone. My parents have always told me, "If you don't believe in something, then nobody will believe in you." To me, that means standing up for your values. If I stay true to what I believe, I'll always have someone believing in me, even when things get tough.

My community service has shaped me into the person I am today. Learning skills like communication, leadership, and respect have prepared me for whatever comes next. These 253 hours have taught me that you never know when the most unexpected opportunities may come your way; you just have to be ready to show up.