

At my Jesuit high school, Fordham Prep, I have deepened my understanding of and commitment to service, grounded in the spiritual and ethical teachings of St. Ignatius. These teachings, especially the concept of “Cura Personalis”, or care for the whole person, have prompted me to devote 250+ hours to service in high school across numerous activities. These activities include but are not limited to: building a home and wheelchair ramp in Tennessee, volunteering and interning at a local nonprofit, tutoring students of all grades at my high school for the past two years in latin and writing, founding my schools Red Cross Club and leading blood drives, a CPR class, and fundraisers as club president, serving as a senior leader of my school's Ministry Leadership Team, and engaging in beach cleanups in Belize.

Through the amount of effort I have devoted to service activities, it has become a core part of who I am as a person, as I truly believe service not only helps those you are serving, but deeply helps the person who is willing to serve. It is because of the personal importance of service in my life that I am that much more grateful to be nominated for the St. Vincent's Hospital Award by my high school, and am honored to be considered by an organization with such a clear commitment to helping those in need.

I will lead with an experience that I think is most in line with the mission of St. Vincent's Hospital, specifically, supporting a “dignity of human life and commitment to the community”. Beginning last June, I became a volunteer at a local nonprofit called Part of the Solution (POTS). For a week, alongside my peers, I engaged in cooking, meal distribution, and pantry operations to help those in need as a part of an immersion trip. But after the week was over, I felt that I had more to give to the organization and to the community. I emailed the volunteer coordinator, and became a “Long Term Stability Intern”, focusing on helping to create lasting change in the lives of those in need. I did this by updating legal and social service referrals used by thousands of clients each year. Many of the referrals were outdated, containing organizations that had closed during the pandemic, or had month-long waitlists: such as shelter referrals, benefits, healthcare services, and most shockingly, domestic violence resources. Though I updated and consolidated information for clients, and though I felt I was making a difference, I also felt it was a mere bandaid to a broader neglect of the most vulnerable. I wanted to bring services directly to clients in need, bridging the unpredictable gap of relying on other organizations to address the needs of those who are marginalized.

So that's what I did. I initiated a new partnership with a Bronx organization, bringing access to a rapid rehousing portal directly to domestic violence survivors who were clients of POTS. This portal offers an expedient 24-hour response for intake for rapid rehousing services. Helping to connect clients to urgent housing placements ignited hope in me. I believe the issue of violence and many other fundamental issues in our society are problems that we as a world can and should confront. We can change the world from the ground up, all of us, one act of service at a time.