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St. Vincent's Hospital: 34th Annual Youth Awards

Mother Teresa once said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." For me, casting a stone means going out into the world to serve others—making a difference. Ever since I was a little girl, bringing a smile to someone's face has brought a smile to my own. My passion for service has only grown stronger over the years, as I have participated in over 100 hours of service grounded in the mission of St. Vincent's Hospital: respect, compassion, and commitment to ourselves and others.

Since my freshman year, I have been a dedicated member of Mission Outreach, advocating for respect and compassion for the lives of those around us—no matter who they are. Each year, I have helped organize a food drive for St. Peter and Denis parish. Recently, I began a long-term fundraising project for Hillside Food Outreach to supply home-bound individuals with daily needs. My friends and I raised over \$700 in a flash donation drive for Hillside when SNAP benefits were affected by the 2025 Government Shutdown. Additionally, advocacy is one of the biggest ways that we can bring about change, casting a stone to create a ripple among the waters. As a previous member and public relations officer for the National Art Honor Society, I raised awareness for the Keith Haring Foundation and the Kabuki syndrome by hosting school-wide fundraising activities.

Furthermore, the desire to help those around me is inextricably linked to my academic interest in healthcare, which inclines me to be charitable in all aspects of life. As co-president of the Red Cross Club, I obtained donations from the Afya Foundation to make first-aid kits for the

homeless in New York City. I made use of leftover supplies to provide emergency kits for families affected by a fire in Yonkers. It is in times of need that we must be there for our friends and families, and it brought me great joy to be able to help these individuals get back on their feet. As a member of HOSA: Future Healthcare Professionals, I made crafts for children at Mount Sinai Hospital and cards for teachers during the holidays to bring cheer during everyday moments. Outside of school, I am part of a fundraising team for Blood Cancer United called Student Visionaries of the Year, raising money by selling crafts, organizing breakfast bars, and other creative activities to provide resources for cancer patients.

I believe it is important to give back to communities that provide endless support and help me grow. Another way I give back is by serving as a lector at my parish on Sundays and filling in for other lectors whenever needed. Every person is unique and contributes to the world in a special way; my goal is to make sure that those around me know how special they are. To honor local veterans and their dedication to serving the United States, I serve meals during events at the Throggs Neck Memorial American Legion Post 1456. Additionally, I volunteered at a water station during the 2025 Yonkers Marathon to support local athletes.

One thing I have learned from all of my volunteer experiences is that sometimes, even after putting in all your effort and dedicating lots of time, there will not always be a tangible reward. However, genuine charity is not rooted in reward: it is rooted in love. When we live our daily lives with love, charity is not an effort—it becomes a way of life. We are always encouraged to make good decisions and to think about our futures. However, I find thinking about the person next to you just as important because you get to be part of something bigger. You get to cast a stone across the waters to create ripples. And those ripples are always beautiful to see.