

Zoe Vanderheid

"No one can do everything, but everyone can do something" ~unknown. This brilliant quote should be used as the basis of daily life. It not only implies that anyone can make a difference, but also that no one can do it by themselves. One person can touch lives, but we need help to change the world. As citizens of this community it is our duty to give back and I try to fulfill my role as a member of the neighborhood.

I have done numerous services for my local community and others that affect people out of state and out of country. One of my accomplishments close to home was Relay for Life. Last year I was part of the Longshore Lake team. I raised money and walked over a course of two days for cancer awareness. Relay was one of the most memorable and inspiring activities that I have ever experienced and I plan to participate again this year. Another event I was a part of was visiting the Ronald McDonald House. A group of students and I cooked dinner for families with children in the hospital. We got to visit a few families and generally brighten their day. It broke my heart to see the stressed families but it was soon put right back together when I saw that they really appreciated our efforts.

Some of my services that were country and nationwide include a Hurricane Katrina lemonade stand, Operation Care, and fundraising for Colombia. When Katrina hit in 2005, my friend and I decided that we would try to help. We had no intentions of obtaining enough money to send to the cause but we gave it a try. In the end we earned \$250. My dad's company matched the amount and we were able to give \$500 to the Red Cross's Katrina Relief Fund. Another project I participated in was Operation Care. We collected items and sent care packages to soldiers in Iraq. My donations helped fill boxes that went to well-deserving soldiers. The third nationwide achievement I was a part of was fundraising for kids in Colombia. My Spanish club sold hot chocolate and churros at an outdoor concert. We raised a generous amount of money to support Colombian schools. Our efforts helped pay for sports equipment for the students. These projects connected me to the planet I live on and educated me about the struggles around the world.

As treasurer of National Junior Honor society, I have encountered many opportunities to volunteer and give back. One of these opportunities was to volunteer at KATS, a program to help incoming sixth graders adjust to school. I was able to give tours and help students in their mock schedules. I have also participated in all of the canned food drives and Pennies for Pasta collections throughout my middle school years. To most students, the collections are just another competition but when I really think about how the cans and change add up, it gives me a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

I have also had the chance to enter some service endeavors outside of the society. In past Halloweens, while trick-or-treating, I asked for change. The money went toward the Pennies for Parkinson's Foundation, a program that tries to give back what Parkinson's disease has taken away. I donate my old soccer cleats and shin guards to the Optimist Club of Naples after each soccer season as well. When my old equipment doesn't fit, other families can come and get it for their younger children.

It always seems corny when people say that helping warms their heart, but it is truly the feeling you get. For that very feeling, I try to give back through community service as much as possible. It makes me realize how fortunate I really am and keeps me in check with the world. I'm simply happy to help.

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