

MELINA HAZZARD
IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

In all honesty, I didn't look forward to writing this essay. Despite how it sounds, my reluctance was not out of laziness. I simply don't like writing about myself. I write stories, but I don't like using the word "I" when not writing from another's point of view. However, I decided to pen this in the end.

I met my best friend, Samantha, in preschool, and we've never once fought in ten years of being close friends. We have influenced each other's lives greatly and equally. I introduced her to Celtic music, and she got me into Celine Dion. She says that I got her started on story-writing, and we write together almost monthly. I've given her help with details, and in return she helps me (often) with spelling. I don't know what I'd do without her.

Samantha was the original reason that I joined Girl Scouts in third grade. However, as time progressed, I realized how much I enjoyed the service projects we took part in. One that touched me the most was when we volunteered at the League for Animal Welfare, a "no-kill" shelter in Batavia, Ohio. I had just lost my dog, Harry, so bringing some of his old dog toys for the shelter dogs felt right, and the "no-kill" part really appealed to me. My dad, always the dog lover, checked out the website and promised that my family could volunteer there every so often.

Last year, I joined the school newspaper. My partner, Alex, and I decided to interview the woman who runs the League to spread the word about the no-kill shelter. The article got published and I received several inquiries about it in the following week. Alex also told me that some of her classmates were asking her about it, too. I'm glad that more people know about the League because it is such a great place.

Late March of last year, I began doing Confirmation Service hours. I actually had more fun doing 21 hours of family, parish and community service than I thought I would. Samantha and I ran the face-painting booth at a fundraiser for a girl with cancer. After writing "Smiles 4 Sophie" (the name of the walk-a-thon) down our arms and across our faces, and working for 3-4 hours on a hot summer day, we realized that we had gotten the words sunburned onto our arms and faces! We got a good laugh and plenty of donations for Sophie over that!

I also ran the hairspray booth at the church festival that summer. I taught one younger girl who was there to do it, too, and she helped me the rest of the shift. When no one showed up for the second shift, I worked that, too. I volunteered out of choice because it was pretty fun, not for the extra service hours. I had finished those the night before and enjoyed every minute!

This year, in 8th grade, my classmates and I were each assigned a first-grade Buddy who we take to Mass every Thursday. It wasn't long before I realized how much the younger kids look up to the eighth-graders and I realized what a responsibility it is. At the end of the year at the last school Mass, the first-graders sing a song to their Buddies, usually one like "I Will Remember You" or something similar. When I was younger, I thought that when the eighth-grade girls cried over it, they were just naturally sensitive, but now I know how attached you can get to a younger kid. When they run over just to you to say "hi" at least weekly, or when you are carrying them around on your back during a field trip to the zoo, you just automatically bond.

Now that I've written this, I grasp how much more volunteer work I would like to do. I think that I'll ask my dad to take my family to the League for Animal Welfare again soon, and I'll see if there are any parish organizations that I can work at. I hope to do volunteer work as an adult, and I think that the best way to do that would be to start early. After all, as Anne Frank once said, "The final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."