

## **Aubrey Rose Foundation Scholarship**

Katie Kehres

Immaculate Heart of Mary

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I must admit, it's hard to talk about my actions and good deeds, but I enjoy making people smile. It's so much easier to talk about other people in positive ways. In reflecting on my service accomplishments, I realize, although I have participated in many charitable events, my true gift is in making people smile.

I try to make others smile by doing small things for them. I believe that small actions can often make someone's days. A simple smile in the hallway, holding the door for the person behind you, or just genuinely caring about a person's response when you ask how they are doing can turn a bad day in to a better one.

Over the past several years, I have participated in numerous charitable events and service projects. I held a plant sale at the end of my street and raised over a hundred dollars for Ronald McDonald House. I was able to make the donation in person during a visit with my Girl Scout troop. The lady who received my donation smiled from ear to ear. I was delighted.

Last year, I participated in the Smiles for Sophie Walk-a-Thon at our parish. Sophie was the daughter of my mom's friend who had a brain tumor. We held a fundraiser for the family and I helped in many ways. I made posters, sold bracelets, and decorated for the event. My favorite part of the event was when we wrote down prayers for Sophie on little slips of paper and put them in helium balloons. We let the balloons go and sent them to God in heaven to receive our prayers. While lots of people were crying, it made me smile.

I have also participated in the Batahola garage sale at our parish for the past three years. I work in the receiving trucks and help unload and organize all the donations. It made me feel exceptional to be helping out the poor by raising money. I have also worked at our parish festival for several years. This past summer, my friends and I worked at the hair spray booth. I enjoyed seeing all the young kids smile after getting their hair painted all different colors. It was very funny, and we are looking forward to working again this year.

My service extends beyond just my church and parish. I am a very active teenager. I swim year-round and run track in the spring. I love the atmosphere of swim meets. They are loud and everyone cheers on their teammates. Swim meets are such a positive experience for me.

This year, I worked a swim meet for the younger kids. I timed with my friends and cheered for all of the swimmers. I really like boosting people's spirits and getting them pumped for their races. It's important to me that the younger kids get interested in a

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sport that is on the rise. The pool gives me a place to forget about school and the drama that comes with it. I can just focus on swimming.

Our swim team recently went on a bus trip to Nashville, Tennessee – no parents allowed. I had already been to the meet the previous year, so the other kids that had not been yet looked up to me. I was proud to be a leader and looked up to by my teammates. One of my friend's mom thanked me for being so inclusive with her daughter because at first, she had felt alone. It made me grateful to know that she felt that way.

Over the past summer, my swim team participated in Tri-4-Joe. It's a local triathlon founded for a little boy in our community named Joe who has Down's Syndrome. Joe was at the event. He was running around all day, smiling, meeting people, and being doted on. It was a very memorable day for me. I was happy to know that while I was enjoying myself with my friends, someone in need was being helped by the money we raised.

Another action of mine that fills me with honor was at a track meet last year. After running the 800m run, a girl from another team was doubled over, having trouble breathing. A man, either her coach or her dad, was cajoling her and trying to get her to calm down. I had been in the same situation before, so I decided to go over and talk to her. I asked her if it was her first time running the event. She said yes through a series of deep breaths and sighs. I sat there talking to her and reassuring her. Eventually she smiled and thanked me. I love making new friends, so I was thrilled. Her coach was informed about my action and happened to be good friends with my coach. He talked to my coach and said that he was very grateful to me for showing such good sportsmanship. It was an unforgettable experience.

Every year at my school, each eighth grade student is assigned a first grade buddy. I was excited to meet mine - a little girl named Hailey who seemed very shy. I got to know her a lot better at our trip to the zoo. I love how she smiles at me a lot. I love when people smile. I decided that in order to be a better buddy, I needed to do something special. At Christmas, I invited her over to my house to bake cookies and make ornaments for her tree. I am glad I had her over and went the extra yard to be a fun buddy. Most people only do the minimum requirements with their buddies, which are taking them to Mass on Thursday mornings and occasionally helping them with projects.

Many people have taught me what being an honorable person requires. I am grateful for each and every person who has been kind enough to help out someone in their community, not expecting anything in return. I have learned that helping others makes me feel like a genuinely good person, and I am looking forward to the chances the future holds for helping people in any way possible – one smile at a time! `