

Elijah Darnell - St. Teresa of Avila - Elder High School
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My name is Elijah Darnell but my family and friends call me Eli or "E". I am the oldest of 5 children in my family. My parents are very involved in my parish, school, and community. I believe this is why I see the importance of making a difference in the lives of my siblings, my school, and my community.

At home, I have made a difference by being a caretaker and role model to my siblings. Two days a week, my mom and dad both work and I am responsible for my 4 siblings after school. I help them with their homework, get them snacks, and try to be sure they are occupied or safely playing. I also try to keep peace among them until my parents get home which is not always an easy thing to do. I try to be a role model to them by doing my best at school, listening to my parents and showing them the importance of helping others and treating others with love and kindness.

I am in the 8th grade at St. Teresa of Avila School. Like most boys my age, I participate in sports including soccer, volleyball, basketball, and cross country. However, I am also very involved in several activities at school including Student Council and my school's Youth Group. As an 8th grade representative for Student Council, I give up lunch and recess time to plan Student Council events such as pep rallies, bake sales, and preparing small treats for the students to promote our spirituality. As a member of the Youth Group, I attend monthly meetings and participate in numerous fundraisers and service activities. This summer at my parish festival, I volunteered at one of the booths all three nights and waited on people at the chicken dinner one night. In the spring I helped set up St. Teresa's Flower Sale, and helped at the Flower Sale by taking flowers out to customer's cars. Around Halloween time, I helped make treat bags for the students at Resurrection school. During Advent, I volunteered at St. Teresa's Bruin Christmas where I helped with setup and cleanup; I also ran one of the kids craft activities. I love volunteering at these events because I like spending time with my friends but I especially like seeing people's smiles after we help them.

I also find many opportunities in my community to serve others and make a positive impact on others. I am a server at least one mass at St. Teresa nearly every week including weekend masses, weekday masses, holy days, weddings, and funerals. Over the summer I have been a leader for a small group at St. Teresa's Vacation Bible School for the past two years. There, I lead kids (ages 3-10) in discussions and move them safely through the various activities. Every year my siblings and I go to the Eldermount Adult Daycare Center, where we sing Christmas carols and visit with the residents. I am a member of the Joyful Noise Youth Choir, where I am the oldest of more than 40 participants. We rehearse every Sunday morning and sing at one mass per month. Finally, I have been involved in raising money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society the past 4 years. Last year I helped my mom raise over \$70,000 for LLS when she participated in the Man and Woman of the Year Campaign. I helped with her fundraising efforts which were in memory of my grandmother who passed away from Leukemia before I was born. I have also participated in the LLS Light the Night walk for the past two years. In 2014 it was in honor of my friend, Logan, who is in remission from Leukemia and was honored at the walk. This past year, I was there to

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support my friend Olivia in memory of her dad who passed away from a blood cancer in June 2011. We walked around the pre-walk activities and asked people if they would like to "make a wish". For each wish we collected, a company would donate money towards LLS. Overall, participating in community activities is fun and makes me feel like I am helping others to feel happiness too.

I think volunteering and serving others is just a part of my everyday life. My actions at home, at school, and in my community are a reflection of how I live my life each day. I am compassionate, caring, kind, and a leader. I hope that my actions make people smile and make them want to help their own family, school, and community.