

Eleanor Hudepohl - Saint Ursula Villa – St. Ursula Academy

Have you ever seen an elderly person's face light up just from the pure joy of seeing a young child? I have, and I receive this gift when I go with my class to volunteer at Brookdale Senior Living. Have you ever seen a second grader come out of their shell and start to understand what you are trying to teach them and go on to excel in school? While I was tutoring twin second grade girls from my school, I did.

These kinds of things are the best rewards in my life, and it has nothing to do with money or personal gain. It has to do with my effect on others through many different activities including leadership, volunteering, and small acts of kindness.

The first way that I affect people around me in my life is through leadership. In school, as I am Treasurer on Student Council and on the board for Chi Alpha Omega, a community service club, I help plan many volunteer events. Among other events, I helped plan a Christmas party at Madisonville Daycare Center. It was amazing to see how excited and happy a little girl was to receive a single Christmas present!

Another way I have realized that I can affect people in my life at school or at home is through volunteering. One example is through my most recent visit to Brookdale Senior Living. I was helping an elderly woman with a Christmas craft for her room, and she was laughing and dancing to the music in her seat in the activity room. It was only after we left that my teacher let me know that she was usually not talkative and didn't leave her room much. It is through planning and participating in events like these that I realize how much effect I can have on people.

Giving must be contagious, and I must have caught the bug from Lauren Hill. After learning about her fundraising campaign, I wanted to help in her effort to find a cure for cancer. I proposed to my gym teacher that our whole school take the Layup for Lauren Challenge and shoot layups with our non dominant hand after spinning around five times. Again, the whole school caught the bug and we raised over \$5,000 for The Cure Starts Now Foundation. It was inspiring to help Lauren Hill reach her dream!

An additional service activity that I coordinated at Kroger for Interparish Food Ministry was a food drive to help provide canned food items and essentials to others during the holiday season. The food pantry staff was so grateful to receive two bins of food and staples to stock their shelves.

Lastly, one of the most impactful ways that I can affect people is through small acts of kindness. For instance, this Advent season, I made a 28 Days of Advent calendar for our home. This means that every day of Advent I did a small act of kindness that helped make their day just a little bit brighter. Some examples of my daily acts of kindness included holding the door open for someone, complimenting a person on their outfit, lending someone a book, assisting someone with their computer, and even just sharing a smile with someone. These simple acts really brightened their day, as these actions put smiles on their faces and made them happy.

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I have been very fortunate to witness many lives being affected through my service in my community and school, and I plan to continue my service throughout my life. When people become affected for the better by something that I have done, I truly feel that I have been a part of someone's day, and nothing is better to see someone's face light up with a smile resulting from my service. As Mother Teresa once said, "Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing."