

**Elena Stone – Summit Country Day – Summit Country Day High School –  
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Helping others: quite possibly one of the most important parts of a young person's life. Many people can make an effort to help others, but the question is, do they really enjoy it, or are they just doing it to fulfill a service requirement? This is something I ask myself every time I perform service whether it is simply helping out a neighbor or volunteering a food pantry.

During 2019, I started working on service because I thought I was old enough, and I was very excited to become a contributing part of my community. I started out by helping my mom run volleyball clinics for third graders. Then I went on to help run booths at our school fair. Eventually, I started volunteering in the school spirit shop. I had begun to get into a good groove of service. I continued this into 2020. At the beginning of 2020, I had made it my new year's resolution to volunteer every weekend and at least four times a week during the summer. I wanted to start contributing, not just for service hours, but to make a difference in my community. Once Coronavirus began, I was very disappointed because it had placed a wrench in my plans to complete service, but I was determined to still follow through on the goal I had set for myself.

During quarantine, I started an Instagram page dedicated to posting a daily story about something good someone in the world had done. These stories ranged from a veterinarian giving free medical care to pet owners for their pets, to a couple adopting a baby. I thought that even if I could not physically contribute during the pandemic, a daily uplifting story was a step in the right direction. If I could even make one person's day better, I looked at that as a success. I wanted to do everything I could to help people stay encouraged during the pandemic.

Once COVID-19 died down a little bit, I started assisting my neighbors. I helped plant flowers, do yard work, and watch their kids. They offered to pay me for what I was doing but I told them it was not necessary because I enjoyed it. I also began to donate small amounts of money here and there to causes. My parents pay me a weekly allowance for doing chores around the house and I have always saved it. I decided that I wanted to start donating some of it, so that is exactly what I did. It always filled me with happiness inside to know that I was helping someone who needed help most. Back in November 2020 I made blessing bags which are drawstring bags with water, some food, a hat, gloves, and socks inside. Anytime I spot a homeless person while driving around with my mom, I grab one from the backseat and hand it to them. It makes me so happy to see how grateful and they are when given, what is to me, a small thing.

The number one reason I enjoy service so much is because it makes me feel so lucky to be able to help even one homeless family get a thanksgiving meal or be able to feed their family for a week. Contributing to my community in any way means that I could provide relief and lift some of the weight off even one person's shoulders.

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I am so thankful for that. My hope is that during the Summer of 2021, I will be able to help even more people than I have in the past.