

HOW FAITH AND SERVICE INTERTWINE

BY LIBBY LERCH

Volunteering and community service are core values to me, and I believe they are a part of who I am. For as long as I can remember, my family and my church have instilled in me a passion for community service. I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes at the age of two, and even before then my family had been raising money for Type 1 Diabetes research, since my dad also has Type 1. Every year we have a team that participates in the JDRF One Walk in Philadelphia and raises money for research and awareness for the disease. The Walk, along with other volunteer events for Type 1 Diabetes, became the cornerstone of my service work.

I'm also a class representative for my school's Service Council, which organizes and publicizes local service events, such as feeding the hungry in our community and all over the world, giving underprivileged kids in Philadelphia backpacks filled with school supplies, supporting local nature preserves such as Riverbend Environmental Center and various other events. I'm also a member of the No More Kids With Cancer Committee, which is the liaison between the No More Kids With Cancer Organization and my school.

The No More Kids With Cancer Organization was founded after the passing of my classmate and close friend, Naya Summy, from a long and tough battle with a rare form of brain cancer at the age of 11. I remember in the days and weeks leading up to her death, I prayed to God every night for a miracle and for her to overcome her cancer. However, she eventually passed away, and I remember feeling angry and betrayed by God because He chose not to save such a special girl in so many people's lives. I now know that this was how it was meant to be, because I believe Naya is in a much better place now, with God, and that she is watching over the No



More Kids With Cancer Organization and its marvelous efforts in funding further research for childhood cancer. This helped me understand that God always has a plan for us, and every once in a while we should step back and let Him do as He plans in order for something positive to come from a negative.

My church, St. David's in Radnor, has also given me many volunteering opportunities, ranging anywhere from helping out with the annual St. David's Fair to dressing up as one of the three Wise Men on the first Sunday of Epiphany! St. David's has a way

of making community service fun, even for those who might not be too keen on service work.

I have been a member of St. David's for as long as I can remember, and I believe that I'll be forever indebted to the church for everything it has given me. The St. David's community is the warmest, most welcoming and loving community I've ever been a part of, and I see God in so many of the people I know at St. David's. They've taught me about God's miracles and Jesus' parables, how to be a good Christian and to believe in what I believe (not what I'm



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told to believe), and what a good person looks and acts like. The church has given me an unwavering faith in Christ and I hope to be a part of St. David's for a very long time.

I think my faith is intertwined with my passion for service. I see works of God in the people I volunteer with, no matter how big or small the project might be, and I feel God's presence in knowing we are helping people who do not have the same opportunities as many in our community do. On a life-changing service trip to Guatemala with St. David's this past

summer, I saw God multiple times each day. It is an incredible thing to be able to feel God's presence, and I feel this the most when I'm doing things for others.

My faith has made me realize the incredible gifts and opportunities I've been given, and that these were given to me by God, and should be used to serve others. This is one reason why volunteering is so important to me, because what one person might need is something that another can give or do. I've learned that God sees people for their actions, personality, and their heart, and not for anything they wear or own. I

don't think I have everything, nor do I want "everything," because I know I have God, and He has given me the ability to give to others. The things I give are my time, my work ethic, and whatever I can contribute to any given project. I don't think you have to be the strongest, smartest, or most qualified person in order to be a good servant to God and to others; if Christ is in your heart and you are serving Him, He will be seen to others through you and the works you do.