

When I think about service above self I think about putting others first. Over the years there have been many ways where I have demonstrated this. I have volunteered by putting a lot of time into the community and helping out with things where it was needed. Some things that I have done are clean up parks around the city, volunteered as the team manager of the varsity soccer team from freshman year through senior year, assisted at vacation bible school, and worked in the concession stand for the Cohoes Little League. One thing that I truly love to volunteer for is the Unified Basketball Team.

During the spring of 2022 I was given the opportunity to be the student coach for our Unified Basketball Team and it was truly a life changing experience. In this role I was able to work with students who had varying levels of disabilities and it solidified for me my desire to be a school social worker. During the unified season I had the chance to teach them how to play basketball while connecting with each of them on a personal level. Taking the time to work with each of them has really improved my communication skills and helped me to have more patience when talking to people. I began to develop a sense of empathy as I was spending more time with the students in the gym and understanding more about their lives at home. As I was getting to know the team I truly realized how kindness could have such a big impact on them. Everyday when I walked in the gym to meet them before practice or a game they all would have big smiles on their faces and always come and give me a hug. This role was so important to me that I chose to volunteer as the student coach again during my senior year.

In addition to being a unified basketball coach I have also spent my quiet studies during my high school career helping students in the behavior support classroom at my school. Whether they needed help with their homework or they just needed to get something off of their chest, I was there to help. While continuing to work with these students, I have grown very strong personal relationships with them and gotten to know a lot about their lives. This has made me realize that you need to put yourself in someone else's shoes before you ever judge them. You will not always know what people are going through on the inside because they might not show it or tell you.

Overall I have had many different experiences where I have put others before myself and I truly enjoy when I have the opportunity to help others and try to help the best I can. I plan to continue volunteering during my college years as I study to be a social worker at Keuka College.

- Julia Marci -