

Annabelle Tobin

### Meals on Wheels: Fighting Hunger and Isolation

I am grateful that Serviam, meaning I will Serve, is the foundation of an Ursuline education. As an Ursuline Academy student, I have learned to implement this into my everyday life and have immersed myself in the spirit of its purpose. This past Thanksgiving and Christmas, I served with Meals on Wheels and found it exemplified the values of Serviam. Meals on Wheels in Dallas-Fort Worth is run by the Visiting Nurses Association. It serves more than 4,600 seniors a day and describes itself as “more than a meal,” which hit home for me. It not only fights hunger, but just as important, it helps combat isolation.

While serving, I understood I could be the only visitor the clients were going to see that day. This reality motivated me to not only deliver their meal, but also greet them with a smile and inquire about their day. I made sure to know their names before I knocked on the door. Additionally, we can check birthdays on the app and sing a birthday song if it is recent. It was rewarding when the clients would step outside their door for a conversation. One woman introduced me to her dog, Paloma, and wanted to get to know more about me, which was powerful. Another woman wanted to tell me about her leg injury and how that was preventing her from working. Many clients would invoke the Lord’s name, such as by saying “God bless you” to me, and that was moving to experience the Faith of those most in need. It was also rewarding when a client did not initially answer the door. At first, panic sets in that a person would miss a meal, but my persistent calling and knocking often paid off when the client eventually opened the door, and I could serve their needs. Interacting with the clients gives an indescribable feeling as a volunteer. Their entire demeanor changes when they are greeted with a smile and a “Hello.” These interactions show the clients they are valued and loved. As I was serving, I felt a deep appreciation

for my physical health and the opportunity to serve the community. I am quickly realizing that the Serviam not only benefits those being served, but also the server. Serviam creates a full-circle relationship between the volunteer and the recipient.

This falls under the category of Purpose. The beneficiaries of Meals on Wheels rely on these deliveries for nutrition, making the service vital to their physical health. I learned that a smile, eye contact, and conversation deliver the compassion vital to their emotional wellbeing, which is just as important as the meals themselves.

It is through serving others that we truly come to understand the blessings we have. I am fortunate to have a wonderful family, physical health, and a steady food source. I attend an incredible school while receiving a high-level education forming life-long friends. I have been honored to serve as an Ursuline Ambassador this year. I am proud to model what Ursuline represents.

Serviam will play a role in my future. It is through the service to others that I can become the best version of myself. It is the best way to follow in the teachings of Christ. I will continue to serve organizations like Meals on Wheels and just as importantly will serve through small, daily gestures that can make a bigger impact than we realize. I aspire to continue being a student athlete in college and pursuing a career in Medicine so that I can serve those who are vulnerable.

Serviam has caused me to improve my perspective on life. Prioritizing the needs of others through service positively impacts the recipient, the server, and our society. Meals on Wheels serves the needs of the isolated by improving their physical and emotional livelihood and I am proud to contribute to its purpose of being “more than just a meal.”