

Tori Higgins '26



Not every sixteen-year-old can say that they are in the process of turning their service project into a nonprofit organization. Tori Higgins '26 is the exception.

It all started in 2022 when Tori was serving at the Mary Ann Brett Food Pantry at Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Dorchester. It was the Christmas season, and Tori recognized a need to provide holiday gifts to the children frequenting the food pantry.

After asking the children to write lists of toys they especially wanted that year, Tori set her eyes on fundraising to make their wishes come true. Tori ultimately raised \$2,000 with a Facebook appeal, and with funds successfully secured, it was time to head to Walmart to fill cart upon cart with toys.

Tori's house looks a lot like Santa's Workshop in the weeks leading up to toy distribution.



Tori's house where she stores the toys until it is time to bring them to the Mary Ann Brett Food Pantry for distribution.

As Christmas swiftly approached, it was time to present the toys to the children. "It was so rewarding to watch the kids as they got their toys," says Tori, smiling. "I didn't think it would affect me as much as it did! Seeing the kids so happy was such a great feeling."

Tori's objective was for everyone to be included and to share in the Christmas joy. To ensure this, Tori bought extra soccer balls and doll houses for the kids that weren't able to make a wish list or for any child who might come into the pantry who had never been before. With the money Tori raised, she was able to buy enough extra toys to give out to visiting children throughout the spring!

In the following year, 2023, Tori organized her second toy drive. That year, Tori saw an increase in the amount of money she was able to raise which impacted the number and quality of toys she was able to buy. "We were able to give a Barbie Dreamhouse to 3 kids!" Tori says, proudly, referencing that season's most popular and desired toy.

Tori is gearing up for her third consecutive toy drive this winter.

In addition to toy drives, Tori organizes backpack drives for the children at the pantry during the back-to-school season. Not only does Tori purchase the backpacks, she fills each backpack to the brim with back-to-school supplies.



Photo taken from Tori's house where she stores items for the backpack drive until it is time for distribution.

Currently, Tori is in the midst of her second backpack drive. She has raised \$800 and 60 backpacks. Tori estimates that she will be able to fill 100 backpacks by the end of the drive.

Tori still serves at the Mary Ann Brett Food Pantry every weekend, where she greets and registers families with her cheerful demeanor, fills grocery bags, stocks the shelves, and more.

“Before starting at Ursuline,” says Tori, “I had never worked at a food pantry before. When I started serving at a food pantry for my service hour requirement in grade 7, my eyes were truly opened. I never knew how much poverty was in my town.” Tori continues: “Now, I forget that I am supposed to keep track of my service hours because it has become a part of my life and my weekly routine.”

Tori is in the process of expanding her toy and backpack drives into a nonprofit known as Kids Helping Kids. With the help of Jim and Pattie Brett, owners of the Mary Ann Brett Food Pantry, this project is well underway.

In addition to being exceptionally kind and generous, Tori is exceedingly humble. Her commitment to *Serviam* is something that Tori maintains quietly and without fanfare.

Pattie Brett puts it best: “Tori is a leader, not a follower.” She continues: “To say we are grateful to have Tori among us is an understatement. Tori is one special angel in the circle of the Mary Ann Brett Food Pantry volunteers.”

We could not be more proud of Tori for her wholehearted embrace of the Ursuline mission; may Tori’s story act as a reminder of the importance of serving others and making the world a better place.

If you’d like to help Tori’s efforts for the back to school or holiday toy drive, please contact Tori at: Victoriahiggins8@icloud.com. You can follow Kids Helping Kids on Instagram at @Kids_Helping.Kids