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What Service Means to Me

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention. Service, it can embody so much of who you are as a person, and to me it means showing up for the people around you and not expecting them or anyone else to do anything for you in return. Service isn't about recognition; it's about giving up your time, energy, and heart to make someone else's day even just a little bit better. To me, service is about being present, helpful, and contributing to a cause that's larger than myself.

One moment that shaped my understanding of service happened when I was in the sixth grade at St. Rose Elementary School. My religion teacher offered service hours to help around the first grade classroom that she also assisted in. At first, my only motive for going up to her after class and volunteering my lunch times was because it was the most convenient offer I had received so far for the 10 hours I needed to complete over the course of the school year. After two weeks of grading addition and subtraction worksheets I realized that I was hurrying out of my classroom to get to the lunch tables quickest or to the front of the lunch line so that I could spend that little bit of extra time helping out.

Throughout the course of the year and the years after that I grew into a habit that I loved helping out around the classroom, copying papers for lessons, grading worksheets, making crafts with the kids, and creating a bond with the kids. By the end of the year each year I knew all of the first graders and they all knew me, it was an amazing feeling to know that I had a positive

impact on the classroom in the short amount of time I had in there each day. By the end of the sixth grade I had over 110 hours logged. But, by the end it wasn't about the hours I received, it was about how I was able to help when my teacher needed it.

Now, I try to bring the same mindset into my everyday life. Service isn't always about organized opportunities or formal hours, it's about finding ways, both big or small, to show up for others. Whether it's helping a classmate who's struggling, checking in on a friend, or offering to help someone in need, these moments are what define us as a person.

Service above self means putting others' needs before your own sometimes, not because you have to, but because something inside of you knows that it's the right thing to do. It calls us not through obligation, but through connection and a pull to do more for others simply because we can. I've come to believe that each of us has the ability to make someone's day even just a little bit better. And that knowledge is what inspires me to serve, not the rewards, but rather the relationship, impact, and the little reminder that we are in this world together. In the end, service isn't an action, it's a way of seeing the world with compassion and choosing to respond as the best version of yourself.