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Birmingham, MI 48009
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14th Annual Celebration of Youth in Service

Sponsored by
Birmingham Youth Assistance
and
The Birmingham Optimist Club

April 29, 2025
Wylie E. Groves High School





Birmingham Youth Assistance

Oakland County Youth Assistance (OCYA) has been dedicated to the prevention of juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and neglect since 1953. Twenty-six offices in Oakland County, under the auspices of the Oakland County Circuit Court—Family Division, provide programs to serve youth and their families. Youth Assistance programs work because they are community-based and developed by volunteers who have their fingers on the pulse of the community.

Birmingham Youth Assistance (BYA) is proudly celebrating 63 years of serving youth and their families through a variety of programs and resources. A professional caseworker provides short-term counseling to youth (and their families) referred by schools, police, and the courts. BYA offers parent education programs and gives summer camp scholarships that provide learning opportunities and also enable children facing challenges to enjoy a respite from stressful everyday lives. The Mentors Plus program matches youth with screened and trained caring adults. BYA also offers a variety of fun programs designed to strengthen families. These annual programs include Breakfast with Santa and the Kids' Dog Show, an event for kids aged 4-14. Touch a Truck is an opportunity for youngsters to get up close and personal with fire trucks, police cars, construction vehicles, and more. BYA offers a Kids' Zone at the Birmingham Farmers' Market and, of course, our annual celebration of Youth in Service.

BYA operates with the sponsorship and generosity of the Oakland County Circuit Court—Family Division; Birmingham Public Schools; the City of Birmingham; the Villages of Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, and Franklin; and donations from organizations and individuals. Principal funding is provided through the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Thanks to the Generous Sponsors of Birmingham Youth Assistance

Oakland County Circuit Court-Family Division

Honorable Tricia Dare
Honorable Kameshia D. Gant
Honorable Lisa O. Gorcyca
Honorable Maureen H. Kinsella
Honorable Lisa Langton,
Presiding Family Division Judge
Honorable Julie A. McDonald
Honorable Lorie N. Savin
Honorable Amanda J. Shelton
Rich Lynch, *Circuit Court Administrator*
Pamela J. Monville, *Deputy Court Administrator*
Liz Csizmadia,
Chief, Oakland County Youth Assistance

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Andrew Drummond, *Council Member*
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Beverly Hills Lions Club

Lion's Pride Award

The Beverly Hills Lions Club is grateful to Birmingham Youth Assistance for their commitment to strengthening families through community. We appreciate this opportunity to honor the Youths in Service nominees that are demonstrating the true mission of Lionism, We Serve.

This year we will be presenting the Lion's Pride award to acknowledge one outstanding young leader who exhibits strong leadership skills in organizing and implementing service projects and fostering positive change within their community.

The mission of the Lions Clubs is to create and foster a spirit of understanding among all people for humanitarian needs by providing voluntary services through community involvement and international cooperation. From the betterment of local communities, to bringing sight to the world's blind, members never waiver from the mission statement "We Serve". The Beverly Hills Lions Club embraces those committed to building a brighter future for their community.

The Beverly Hills Lions Club is celebrating 53 years of service to the Beverly Hills community this year. Sponsored by the Southfield Lions, the first Installation was held April 14, 1972. At that time the club made the following pledge to the community:

"To our Community, we pledge our best efforts towards making Lionism a viable force in the fulfillment of humanitarian service ... in every area of need ... but especially sight conservation."

The club still adheres to this pledge! The Beverly Hills Lions Club is very proud of its history of service to the community in the true spirit of Lionism. The club continues to serve the community as well as supporting a number of local charities.

For more information on the Beverly Hills Lions Club, please call Mark Scicluna at 313-492-8232 or check our website.

We Serve.



bhlions.org

A Celebration of Youth in Service

Reception

Entertainment provided by Birmingham NEXT musicians Dick Wigginton and Tony Bernardo from the Ed Black Jazz Band

Program

Welcome and Introduction

Ann Nazareth Manning, Birmingham Youth Assistance Chair

Greetings from Oakland County Circuit Court

Honorable Amanda J. Shelton, Oakland County Circuit Court – Family Division

Greetings from Birmingham

Honorable Mayor Therese Longe, City of Birmingham

Youth in Service Awards Presentation

Welcome to a Celebration of Youth in Service

Erin Payton, Youth in Service Program Chair and Birmingham Youth Assistance Board Member

Presentation of Middle School Awards

Erin Payton, Youth in Service Chair and Birmingham Youth Assistance Board Member

Susan Robbins, Birmingham Youth Assistance Vice-Chair

Presentation of High School Awards

Honorable Therese Longe, Mayor, City of Birmingham

Ann Nazareth Manning, Birmingham Youth Assistance Chair

Birmingham Youth Assistance: Mission and Programs

Jennifer Rass, President, Birmingham School Board and Birmingham Youth Assistance Board Member

You Are BYA: Get Involved!

Ann Nazareth Manning, Birmingham Youth Assistance Chair

Youth in Service "All-Star" Awards Presentation

Richard Stasys, Birmingham Youth Assistance Treasurer and Birmingham Optimist Club Board Member

Lion's Pride Award Presentation

Susan Robbins, Beverly Hills Lions Club Board Member and Birmingham Youth Assistance Vice-Chair

Closing Remarks

Erin Payton, Youth in Service Program Chair and Birmingham Youth Assistance Board Member

This program will air on Comcast channel 18, AT&T channel 99, and Wow channel 18 in Birmingham, Bingham Farms, Beverly Hills and Franklin, as well as on Comcast channel 15 in Bloomfield Hills and Bloomfield Township. It will also be available online at www.Bloomfieldtwp.org or www.Birminghamareacableboard.org Video on demand page. Residents will have 24/7 access to the program online.

2025 Youth in Service Honorees — Middle School

Spencer Allen
Berkshire Middle School, 8th grade
Nominator: Pam Lucken—Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Spencer is an active volunteer for his school community. He played the mascot at the Berkshire Open House, helped sort donations for Gleaners Food Bank, and contributed to a collection drive that provided more than 2,000 meals. Spencer also supported the Brightmoor Shelter by organizing holiday stockings for families in need.

Spencer assisted at Bingham Farms Elementary events, running activity stations for younger students. He has nearly singlehandedly managed the school's Green Club recycling programs for two years, as a sixth and seventh grader.

Charles Battenberg
Derby Middle School, 8th grade
Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Charles supported the Lighthouse Thanksgiving food drive, helping pack 1,900 pounds of food and creating Thanksgiving cards for Lighthouse families. He participated in the Quarter Wars event, which raised more than \$1,000 for Derby’s therapy dog that comforts students daily. Charles also volunteered at Moonbeams for Sweet Dreams, brightening pediatric patients’ days at Corewell Health, and organized a reading Bingo game at Pembroke Elementary.

Charles also helped to set up the Battenberg Café at Kettering University and a charity event for the Calvin Johnson Foundation, which aims to assist at-risk youth. Charles and his family raised more than \$1,100 to buy books for a Zambian school by selling indigenous jewelry they bought while traveling in Zambia.

Mia Rose Cox
Berkshire Middle School, 8th grade
Nominator: Pam Lucken—Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Mia Rose has volunteered for a variety of initiatives at her school. She tutored peers and supported food, coat, candy, and clothing drives to benefit underprivileged individuals. She also helped at the Berkshire Middle School Open House.

Beyond school, Mia also supported local non-profits. She assisted Brilliant Detroit with various Human Resources tasks and helped at the event Count It All Joy by preparing cancer comfort bags and crafting Christmas cards. She also supported the Wayne County Deputy Sheriff’s Association and shopped for clothing donations through her church.

Annabel Cusmano
Derby Middle School, 8th grade
Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Annabelle has been an active supporter of multiple community service initiatives at her school. For the Lighthouse Adopt a Teen program, she created banners to promote a holiday gift drive for homeless and runaway teens and also organized the donations for delivery. She supported a Lighthouse Thanksgiving food drive that collected more than 1,900 pounds of food to support families in need. Annabel is a teacher helper, a Curriculum Night Guide, and an Open House leader.

Annabel is a founding member of the Derby School Store, providing items for sale to help students feel prepared for the day. She helped with the Quarter Wars event that raised more than \$1,000 to cover expenses for the school’s therapy dog. Annabel has worked with Detroit Animal



The Birmingham Optimist Club

The Birmingham Optimist Club is a volunteer organization of service-oriented, civic-minded women and men who represent a cross-section of the community. The Optimists’ main purpose is to work with youth and promote optimism as a philosophy of life through active service within the community.

Optimist International

Optimist International has been “Bringing Out the Best in Kids” in communities worldwide, since 1917. There are more than 3,000 clubs worldwide. Optimists conduct 65,000 service projects worldwide each year, serving six million young people. Optimists also spend \$78 million on their communities annually.

Purpose

To develop optimism as a philosophy of life, utilizing the tenets of the Optimist Creed; to promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs: to inspire respect for the law; to promote patriotism and work for international accord and friendship among all people; to aid and encourage the development of youth, in the belief that the giving of one’s self in service to others will advance the well-being of humankind, community life and the world.

2024-2025 Officers

- Tom Longhway, President
- Tom Longhway, Secretary
- William McConnel, Treasurer
- Eleanor Roleston, Past President
- Sean Mueller , Michigan District Governor
- Cathy Neal, Michigan District Lieutenant Governor

2024-2025 Board of Directors

- Rose Falberg
- Jim Hayes
- Christine Lynn Lapinski
- Bob Parker
- David Walker
- Richard Stasys

For more information about The Birmingham Optimist Club, please call Tom Longhway at (248) 568-5608

Isabella Wenger

Seaholm High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Kimberli Ford—Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator



Isabella dedicated considerable effort to supporting Catholic Charities of Southeastern Michigan. Along with others, she led multiple collection drives, yielding more than 3,500 pounds of food for Gleaners, food pantries, and senior citizens. Also in conjunction with Catholic Charities, Isabella led a month-long clothing collection drive to benefit students of Detroit Public Schools. This yielded 63 bags of gently used clothing, shoes, and winter gear. She partnered with a local pet supply store to organize a fundraising event for the Michigan Animal Rescue League, collecting pet food, supplies, and more than \$300 in donations for the shelter. For each of these initiatives, she actively recruited friends and family members to assist.

As a steward leader at Bowers Farm Summer Camp, Isabella spent 160 hours supporting children of all ages. She helped them learn about farm life, understand and care for animals, learn about gardening, and acquire practical skills such as cooking. Isabella also volunteered last year at the Bowers Farm Summer Camp and Fall Festival. She has volunteered for multiple events at her church, including a group effort to make 400 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the underprivileged.

Carly Williams

Seaholm High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Sydney LaDue—Birmingham Patriots Youth Cheerleading



For the past two fall seasons, Carly has served as an assistant coach for seventh and eighth graders on the JV and Varsity Cheerleading teams. Carly taught the girls essential cheerleading skills, choreographed routines, and provided a supportive environment. She emphasized the importance of being a female athlete, helping the girls grow in both skill level and confidence. Carly’s work led to a drastic improvement in the students’ stunting abilities and their tumbling skills. She served for approximately 80 hours each season, plus additional hours for games and competitions, for a total of about 200 hours.

Carly also has been an active member of Seaholm’s Schools Offer Support Club for three years. She participated in various events and served as the club’s social media manager during the past year.

Control to help get dogs adopted and organized a dog playgroup to socialize the dog of a severely injured neighbor. She has made Thanksgiving cards for veterans, helped at her former elementary school’s events, and supported her sister’s Girl Scout troop.

Kendall Dorfman

Berkshire Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Pam Lucken—Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Kendall has dedicated more than 350 hours in the past year alone supporting children with special needs by volunteering at the Friendship Circle. She has served in many of their after school and all-day programs. Kendall provided essential social and life skills support, helping the students form friendships, practice everyday tasks, and develop skills. In all of these programs, she acts as a one-on-one buddy with a Friendship Circle client; the volunteer commitment was particularly intense during the two weeks of summer overnight camp, when she worked one-on-one with a special needs child from 7am to 9pm. Kendall has volunteered at Friendship Circle for nearly two years, for a total of 530 hours. She also raised more than \$500 for the organization by making and selling bracelets.

Kendall also volunteers extensively at her school, helping with Open Houses, Curriculum Nights, and tutoring opportunities. She is a leader in the school’s Links club. As a seventh grader, she planned an Autism Awareness and Acceptance Week. This included playing an autism slide show in the cafeteria daily, featuring an autism awareness quote in daily morning announcements, conducting fundraisers, and holding a spirit day. This year, she is planning an Autism Inclusion Week.

Kaia Heatherly

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Kaia has actively served her school community, volunteering at many events including the Derby Curriculum Night, Band Night, and Open House. She participated in Quarter Wars, an event that raised more than \$1,000 to cover expenses for the school therapy dog. Kaia supported STEAM night at an elementary school.

Kaia also has made greeting cards for Lighthouse families and for veterans, and has volunteered at an animal shelter. She served at her church helping to feed the homeless. Kendall set up for the Unabashed Bash, the school district’s largest fundraiser. She also helped children with Down Syndrome at Gigi’s Playhouse learn and perform a dance.

Julie Iacco

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Julie has been an active volunteer in her student community. She helped to organize the Lighthouse Thanksgiving food drive, including sorting the 1,900 food items collected and making greeting cards for the recipient families. She also supported the collection of 271 pounds of candy for Veterans Hospital Rehabilitation Centers. Julie helped organize the Quarter Wars event, which raised more than \$1,000 to cover expenses for the school therapy dog.

Julie was a student leader for Curriculum Night. She helps to sell bagels on Thursdays, an initiative that has raised more than \$500 for Project We Care. Julie led the Derby Drop and Go, a fun lunch day in which parents drop in to have lunch with their child, and volunteered at the sixth grade parent/student breakfast. Outside of school, Julie raised money for Gigi’s Playhouse by selling wristbands at Pierce Elementary School.

Abigail Klenke

Berkshire Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Pam Lucken—Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Abigail volunteers as a student assistant coach for Berkshire’s sixth grade intramural volleyball program. For one hour a day before school, she works with more than 50 students, teaching them basic volleyball skills and serving as a mentor. Abigail also volunteered at the Friendship Circle, supporting children with special needs, and for the Mid Action Board of the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition.

Abigail tutors her peers and helps her school’s Women's Empowerment Club. As a member of the Garden Club, she works to maintain the Berkshire garden and to remove invasive species in the woods known as the Environmental Study Area. She has volunteered at events benefiting the elementary school she attended, and spends considerable time helping at her church.

Robert Leotti

University of Detroit Jesuit Academy, 8th grade

Nominator: Erin Chekal—University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy, Librarian



Bobby has been actively involved in the daily broadcast at his school. He regularly anchors the news, keeping students informed about events and also leads the daily all-school prayer, which helps students slow down and reflect.

Outside of school, Robert has been volunteering at GiGi’s Playhouse, a Down Syndrome Achievement center which provides enrichment and support. There, he helps with physical fitness and literacy classes, helping individuals to reach their goals and providing acceptance and friendship. He has directly tutored five individuals at Gigi’s.

Dylan Lytle

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



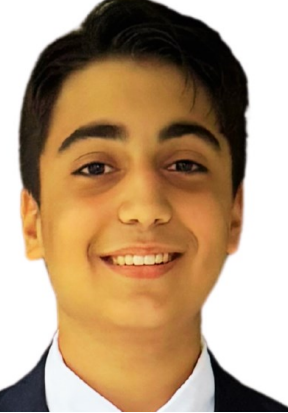
Dylan actively supports community service initiatives at Derby. For the Lighthouse Thanksgiving food drive, which yielded 1,900 pounds of food for Pontiac families, Dylan helped with planning the event, organizing the donations and delivering the items. He also helped in the collection of 271 pounds of candy for veterans receiving therapy at hospital rehabilitation centers.

Dylan volunteers in the school office and was a student leader at Derby's Curriculum Night. Through his church, he has made sandwiches to feed the homeless and organized toys for the annual rummage sale benefitting local charities. He has helped to create Valentine’s Day cards for the elderly.

Alen Ter-Azaryan

Groves High School, 9th grade

Nominator: Elizabeth Sak—Groves High School, Community School Organizer



Alen has actively volunteered at Friendship Circle over the past year, dedicating more than 190 hours to supporting children with special needs at the organization’s summer and winter camps, and helping to raise \$2,500. He also serves on the Youth Action Board for the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition, working to address teen mental health and substance abuse. As a member of the Baldwin Public Library’s Teen Advisory Board, he worked to improve youth and teen programs.

As a member of the Groves Interact Club, Alen helped to plan drives and supported initiatives for foster children. He volunteered at three Birmingham Youth Assistance events. Alen participated in the school’s marching band performance at Victory Day, a special event for children with special needs.

Amelie Wagner

International Academy Okma, 11th grade

Nominator: David Stibitz—International Academy, buildOn Club Sponsor



Amelie has been a very active member of the buildOn club at International Academy for the last three school years, doing service projects and raising money to help build schools in developing countries. Fundraising activities in which Amelie participated, included bake sales and selling concessions at a variety of local festivals, raised about \$1,300 for buildOn. She has tutored in her neighborhood, supported a variety of school events, and volunteered at Forgotten Harvest packaging food for distribution to local food pantries.

Amelie also spent 120 hours volunteering at the summer camp held by a local farm school. Along with other volunteers, she taught children about farm life, animals, and gardening. She also assisted with basic chores at the farm including feeding animals, cleaning out pens, and weeding the garden. Along with some classmates, Amelie went to the Children’s Center and cleaned up the outdoor area so the 200 children there would have a safe place to play.

Alexandra Wenger

Seaholm High School, 10th grade

Nominator: Kimberli Ford—Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator



Alexandra volunteered at Bowers Farm Camp, spending 120 hours helping young campers learn about farm operations, animal care, gardening, and even cooking. She supported Catholic Charities of Southeastern Michigan by participating in a food collection drive at Kroger, at which 875 pounds of food was collected. Alexandra also helped with a clothing drive that yielded 63 bags of clothing and winter gear for students of Detroit Public Schools.

Alexandra frequently helps with events at her church, including pancake breakfasts and bake sales. She supported a group effort to produce 400 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the hungry. Alexandra joined with other students in creating more than 80 handmade cards for the elderly at a senior living community. Her love of volunteerism dates back to her time living in Shanghai, where her family rescued and rehomed 30 stray dogs and cats.

Isabel Sheldon

Seaholm High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Honorable Kathleen Galon—District Court in Eastpointe, Judge



Isabel has helped prepare and distribute meals for the St. Patrick Senior Center in Detroit, providing food to seniors in need. She volunteered at the library for events like Teen Night and Teen Movie Night and supported school events by working at the concession stand.

Isabel also contributed to the local food pantry by packaging meals for those in need and made many blankets at her church for winter distribution. She created veteran cards for Veteran’s Day, participated in Moon Beams at Beaumont Hospital to shine lights up to the windows of children’s hospital rooms, and worked at Seaholm’s Open House to welcome new students and parents.

Nicholas Slazinski

Brother Rice High School, 12th grade

Nominator: Thane Hall—Brother Rice High School Director of Campus Ministry



Nick has been a leader in serving the children from Christ Child Society who visit his school once a month. Along with other students, Nick leads activities and spends time with these children who have survived much hardship. He provides them with attention, guidance, and a fun, supportive environment. Nick also played a significant role in his school’s retreat program, organizing and leading both the Kairos and eighth grade retreats, where he provided spiritual support and shared personal reflections to help others grow.

Youth in Service is a program that recognizes service to a student’s local community. However, Nick also has served others farther afield. On a school trip to Peru, he helped to build a home and painted a school. On another school trip to Brownsville, Texas, Nick assisted newly-immigrated families by providing food, clothing, and supervised playtime for the young children.

Samantha Sweeney

Groves High School, 12th grade

Nominator: Kelly Michaud, Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition Youth Action Board Advisor



Samantha is an active volunteer with the Youth Action Board of the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition, an organization focused on youth mental health and awareness of the risks of substance abuse. Samantha serves as vice president and social media chair, creating engaging and informative content for their social media and attracting more volunteers to support their youth-driven initiatives. As co-president of Groves Big Brother Big Sister, Samantha played a key role in matching 150 upperclassmen mentors with incoming freshmen, fostering connections that helped students navigate the challenges of high school.

Samantha also founded the Groves Pen-Pal Club, through which 26 Groves students connected via letter-writing with students at schools in New York and Maine, as well as with third/fourth grade students at Covington. She assisted in the Groves Athletic Training office, supporting student athletes by attending to injured athletes and organizing supplies, and

served as a student liaison, advocating for student concerns at school board meetings. Samantha was instrumental in forming a women’s bell choir at her church that performs for the congregation.

Jay'ana Maddox

Berkshire Middle School, 7th grade

Nominator: Ruth Samuel—Generators Club of Detroit Inc., Director



Jay’ana has been a dedicated volunteer with Generators Club of Detroit for the past nine years, contributing more than 60 hours of service in the past year and 500 hours cumulatively. She has helped organize quarterly Reading Programs, providing books to children of all ages. Jay'ana also assisted in hosting annual events including senior luncheons, the kiddie disco, and school supply giveaways, for which she helped to pack and distribute 250 book bags filled with supplies.

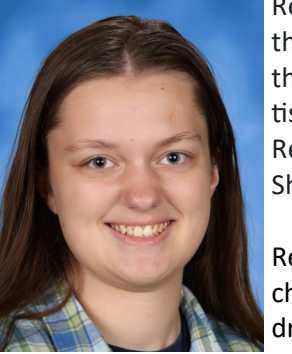
Jay’ana assisted the Generators Club to give away more than 500 books and provide hundreds of free meals at events. She has helped to beautify neighborhoods by cleaning up trash and pulling weeds. Jay’ana’s efforts have provided cultural enrichment for children. She has helped take over 50 kids on outings to the symphony, plays, museums, aquariums, and the zoo,

providing them with experiences they might not otherwise have experienced. Jay’ana helped deliver groceries to needy families during the pandemic.

Reagan Smith

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Fred Costello—Derby Middle School, Assistant Principle



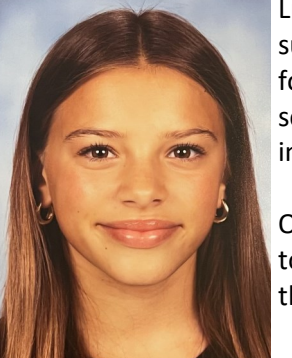
Reagan has served as a classroom LINK at Berkshire, directly assisting many of the students in the Autism classrooms and consistently giving up her lunch and free periods to do so. Since the beginning of seventh grade, she has worked closely with an individual student with autism while also supporting other students in the ASD classroom. In addition to kindness, Reagan has demonstrated patience and problem-solving skills that are far beyond her years. She has supported the LINKS program since she was in the second grade.

Reagan also has contributed to the community as a scout, with efforts including organizing church picnics and maintaining local hiking trails. Through her troop, she contributed to a food drive benefiting Gleaners. Reagan has assisted at Knights of Columbus events as well.

Lucy Sowle

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Lucy has taken a leadership role in a variety of service initiatives at Derby Middle School. She supported the Lighthouse Thanksgiving food drive, which collected more than 1,900 pounds of food. Through the Quarter Wars event, she helped to raise more than \$1,000 to support the school’s therapy dog. Lucy helped to set up the sixth grade student/parent breakfast. By working at the school’s Thursday Bagel Days, she helped to raise more than \$500 for local charities.

Outside school, Lucy volunteered at the Children’s Center in Detroit. There, she has read books to children and helped organize their boutique. Lucy donated clothes and toys to help support the children. She also created and delivered Christmas cards for the Children’s Center.

Corinne Stephens

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Corinne is an active volunteer at Derby Middle School, with a particular aptitude for marketing events. She led the promotion efforts for the Lighthouse Thanksgiving food drive, helping to ensure a successful collection, and also worked to organize and deliver the donations. She volunteered at Pembroke’s first Trunk or Treat event, helping to provide a safe and fun environment for elementary students. By volunteering for Thursday Bagel Day, Corinne helped raise \$500 for Project We Care. She worked to clean up and maintain the garden at Pembroke Elementary.

Outside of school, she volunteered her time and talents through her Girl Scout troop by creating Christmas ornaments for seniors, donating toys and candy to underprivileged children, and raising more than \$1,300 for the Children’s Heart Foundation. To benefit Lighthouse, Corinne created plastic yarn from grocery bags that could be used to crochet blankets and pillows for the homeless. She also volunteers with her church.

Asher Sternberg

Berkshire Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Pamela Lucken— Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Asher is dedicated to serving at his temple. He volunteers in a third grade classroom, assisting the teacher and mentoring 15 students. He also tutors students in Hebrew as they prepare for their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. Asher helps to serve more than 100 people at the temple’s community meals, including Shabbat and Hanukkah dinners.

Asher also volunteers at Berkshire community service initiatives. In the past, he has served at Friendship Circle’s Sunday Circle and winter camp.

Arno Ter-Azaryan

Berkshire Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Pam Lucken—Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Arno has demonstrated exceptional dedication to community service, contributing more than 150 hours in the past year. A key focus of his volunteer work has been at the Friendship Circle, where he spent five weeks serving at their weeklong Summer Day Camp, each week paired one-on-one with a different special needs child. This pairing aspect to the camp program ensures that every camper has a dedicated friend to foster confidence and a sense of belonging. Arno has been involved with Friendship Circle for two years, during his winter and summer breaks. He has participated in their fundraiser, the Walk for Friendship, raising more than \$2,350.

Arno also has volunteered for many Berkshire and Birmingham Public School events including the fifth grade run, Curriculum Night, Open House, and Bingham Boo. Arno serves on the Teen Advisory Board at Baldwin Public Library, supporting youth programming, and the Mid Action Board of the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition, focusing on teen mental health and substance abuse awareness. Arno has supported multiple events for Birmingham Youth Assistance.

Hiren Patel

Seaholm High School, 10th grade

Nominator: Kathleen Grobbel—Corewell Health Children’s Hospital, Child Life Supervisor,



Hiren created and donated 50 goodie bags for children at Corewell Health Children’s Hospital, with a particular focus on items that would appeal to teenagers. After raising nearly \$750 to purchase materials, he curated each bag with items such as crayons, motivational journals, sketchbooks, and craft kits. In addition to the gift bags, Hiren also donated additional art supplies and five wireless speakers. His thoughtful donation provided comfort and a creative outlet for hospitalized children, helping to ease their isolation and fears.

Last year, Hiren made a similar donation of about 40 goodie bags, targeted for younger hospital patients. He also supported the national organization Reach Out and Read by donating \$800 and more than 300 books for children with limited access to reading materials.

Charlisa Penzak

Groves High School, 11th grade

Nominator: John Lawson—Groves High School, Co-Director of Debate and Assistant Forensic Coach



Charlisa, a highly accomplished debater, revived a dormant speech and debate program at Birmingham Covington School and led a newly-formed, inexperienced team to a second place finish at the state middle school tournament. Starting from scratch without funding or prior teaching experience, Charlisa taught 40 students, dedicating 132 hours in the past year. Her debate and forensic coaching imparted skills to her students that included analytical thinking, reasoning, persuasive speaking, and teamwork. She demonstrated leadership in organizing and coaching debate competitions, including judging novice debates and coordinating her students’ participation in regional and state tournaments.

In addition, Charlisa and her siblings together formed a youth music group called Golden Harmony. Over the past year, they have performed 12 concerts across three senior living facilities, bringing joy to elderly residents through musical classics from the 1940s to the 1970s. Charlisa also volunteers as an online tutor with Upchieve, offering SAT and math tutoring to underserved students.

Tessa Shane

Seaholm High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Victoria Orleans—Orchards Children’s Services, Donor Relations/Volunteer Manager



Tessa founded the Michigan chapter of Hoodies for the Homeless, a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to collecting and distributing new and gently used clothing for those in need. As the founder and president, she manages all aspects of the organization, including communications, collection and sorting of donations, and the creation of a donation closet in her basement. Since its launch in October 2024, Tessa’s chapter of Hoodies for the Homeless has collected nearly 3,700 items of new and gently used clothing for both children and adults. She provides clothing directly to families who contact her through social media or by phone, describing their needs and sizing. She also is curating shipments of clothing going directly to families in California affected by the wildfires.

In addition to directly distributing clothing, Tessa has established a partnership with Orchards Children’s Services. She has completed two large-scale donation drives, donating nearly 1,000 articles of clothing for children and families facing hardship in the foster care system. These donations were spread across five locations of Orchards Children’s Services that collectively serve the state of Michigan. Over the past six months, Tessa has dedicated about 60-80 hours purely to the Orchards partnership, in addition to time spent managing Hoodies for the Homeless. Tessa has also spent considerable time volunteering with Friendship Circle, supporting children with special needs by serving as a volunteer counselor at their summer camp and mid-winter break camps.

Rachel Mordukhovich

Groves High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Elizabeth Sak—Groves High School, Community School Organizer



Rachel has been an active volunteer at Friendship Circle for four years, helping children with special needs. She volunteers weekly during the school year and at their day camps during school breaks. As volunteers always get paired up with a “buddy,” she has had the opportunity to make close connections with a number of these children. Rachel also volunteers as a Way-finder at Corewell Health Hospital, helping to direct visitors.

As a mentor in the Groves Big Brother program, Rachel served as a captain, leading a group of her peers as they helped to welcome incoming students. As a member of Student Congress, Rachel participates in many school-sponsored service projects including blood drives, community Trunk or Treat, and vaccine clinics. She has helped out at her Sunday School, teaching Hebrew and religious history to younger children.

Abigail Murphy

Seaholm High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Cindy Malerba—Corewell Health, Program Coordinator, Sharing and Caring Breast Cancer Support



Abigail has volunteered for the past three years for the Corewell Health Sharing and Caring Program, which supports breast cancer survivors. She hand-sews heart-shaped pillows and designs bookmarks to be given to newly-diagnosed patients, providing comfort and support. In her junior year alone, Abigail crafted 25 pillows and designed 30 bookmarks, with a cumulative total of 50 pillows over three years. These heart-shaped pillows help ease pain from the seatbelt during car rides and prevent post-surgical swelling by elevating the arm.

Abigail also has been a Seaholm student ambassador and a Make Me A Maple Mentor, orienting incoming freshmen. She has made cards for veterans and assisted with race events and food bag assembly. Abigail tutors other students and has volunteered for the Youth Action Board.

Michael Murphy

Brother Rice High School, 12th grade

Nominator: Thane Hall—Brother Rice High School, Director of Campus Ministry



Michael has volunteered for the past four years at the LaxBack program at the Metro Detroit Youth Club as a coach, leader, and mentor. LaxBack works with disadvantaged youth, teaching them leadership and the skills of lacrosse. Michael coached nearly 50 young participants in lacrosse, while also helping them develop life skills such as teamwork, communication, and patience. Michael took on key responsibilities, including organizing equipment drives, raising money, and ensuring the program ran smoothly.

Michael has actively supported the Campus Ministry Program at Brother Rice High School. He organized every aspect of multiple successful food drives, helping to raise more than \$1,300 and collect 320 items for local food banks. Michael contributed to the spiritual development of his peers by organizing and leading the Kairos retreat, where he gave presentations and led activities to help his fellow seniors grow emotionally and spiritually. He also led a sixth grade retreat for St. Paul on the Lake students, helping younger students

explore both nature and their faith.

Charlotte Torrey

Berkshire Middle School, 7th grade

Nominator: Pam Lucken—Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Charlotte has contributed to her community in a wide variety of ways. She volunteered at her church’s Sunday School and after school choir program. She also served at the NOAH Project in Detroit, where she helped make 300 sandwiches and snack bags for the homeless. Charlotte participated in several service projects during the summer at Henderson Settlement in Kentucky, where she worked at a Vacation Bible School, helped build homes, and supported the free store.

Charlotte has helped with a car wash to raise money for wells in Honduras and assisted with organizing a Thanksgiving dinner for families in the Brightmoor community. She has packed hygiene kits and school backpacks for those in need, assisted with a diaper drive, and supported the community gardens in Pontiac through Micah 6. Not surprising given her passion for service, she helped to launch a community service club at her school. All told, she served more than 190 hours this year.

Pinelopi Tsapatoris

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Pinelopi has been very active in community service initiatives at her school. She helped organize the Quarter Wars, which raised more than \$1,000 for her school’s therapy dog. She also participated in the collection of candy for Veterans Hospital Rehabilitation Centers. Pinelopi was a student leader at Derby’s' Curriculum Night and helped create a welcoming environment for the sixth grade parent/student breakfast. By volunteering for Thursday Bagel Days, she helped to raise more than \$500 for Project We Care. Pinelopi helped to create a Black History Learning Center at Derby.

Outside of school, Pinelopi has volunteered with Detroit Animal Control, taking rescue dogs out into the community to help get them adopted. She has helped with a local dog playgroup to support a community member recovering from a brain injury. Pinelopi has supported Gigi’s Playhouse, an organization that assists those with Down Syndrome.

Dean Wahab

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Dean has been very active in several service initiatives at his school. He contributed to the Lighthouse Thanksgiving food drive, helping to collect and deliver over 1,900 pounds of food to struggling families. Dean volunteered at the Pierce Elementary STEAM nights, demonstrating science models and getting elementary kids excited about their transition to middle school. He helped raise funds for his school’s therapy dog, assisted in creating a Black History Month learning center at Derby, and made Thanksgiving cards for Veterans.

Outside of school, Dean participated with his family in a nonprofit initiative, Dreamland, that provided more than 1,000 backpacks filled with school supplies to inner city students. He has volunteered at wellness centers that treat the elderly, assisting with free eye exams for 2,000 patients and the distribution of 600 pairs of eyeglasses.

Maxwell Wenger

Derby Middle School, 6th grade

Nominator: Kimberli Ford—Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator



Max has worked with his family members in support of multiple nonprofit initiatives over the past year. In partnership with a local pet store, he and his family collected \$300 in donations and significant amounts of pet food and other supplies to benefit the Michigan Animal Rescue League. He supported a Catholic Charities food collection drive, which raised awareness about food insecurity and collected more than 400 pounds of food for Gleaners.

Max also supported a Catholic Charities drive to collect clothing, shoes and winter gear for students at Detroit Public Schools. He has volunteered with his church to prepare sandwiches for the hungry and has made greeting cards for the elderly at a senior living facility. Max’s love for service dates back to his family’s practice of rescuing and rehoming stray dogs and cats when they lived in China.

Claudia Whitelam

Berkshire Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Pam Lucken—Berkshire Middle School, Teacher and National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Claudia volunteers at the Friendship Circle. She spends nearly every Sunday at their Sunday Circle. There, she serves as a one-on-one buddy who helps children with special needs practice real-world activities with safety and supervision. She also has worked at their summer camp.

Claudia also has supported multiple activities at her school. She has served the Green Club and the Women’s Empowerment Group. She has sold concessions to raise money for various causes, including a fundraiser for leukemia research.

Maggie Wilcox

Derby Middle School, 8th grade

Nominator: Lynmarie Kmiec—Derby Middle School, National Junior Honor Society Advisor



Maggie has been active in serving her school community. She volunteered at the Harlan Elementary Fall Festival, Quarton’s Trunk or Treat, and Pierce Elementary STEM night. Maggie also supported the Lighthouse Thanksgiving Food Drive, helping to collect and organize 1,900 pounds of food and creating Thanksgiving cards for Lighthouse families. She made slides about influential figures to support Black History Month and organized her teacher’s classroom for better efficiency. Maggie collected candy for Veterans Hospital Rehabilitation Centers, created a reading Bingo game for elementary students at Pembroke, and helped with a fundraiser to pay for the care of the school service dog.

Maggie and her family supported Kids Empowered, a local charity that helps families in need, by adopting five families for Christmas. She helped to purchase and deliver the gifts, in addition to supporting a clothing and food drive for these families.

Mateo Milanini

Groves High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Elizabeth Sak— Groves High School, Community School Organizer



Mateo has been active in the Community Service Committee of the Groves Student Congress, organizing many service projects such as blood drives. His committee also collected more than 400 pet toys for the Michigan Humane Society, holding drives at multiple schools and concurrently building awareness of the organization’s work. Mateo leads the Futsal club (similar to soccer) at Groves and assists at a track and field event for elementary school students. He is active with the Youth Action Board of the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition, working to prevent substance abuse.

In addition, Mateo has supported local events such as Halloween Trunk or Treat and has tutored middle school students. While visiting Spain, he spent a week coaching underprivileged kids in soccer and collecting litter.

Samantha Mollo

International Academy Okma, 11th grade

Nominator: Megan Phillips—International Academy Okma, Student Leadership Teacher



Samantha took the initiative to create and organize a student shadow day for incoming ninth graders to experience life at her school. She planned the event, ensuring a smooth schedule that included an opening session, icebreaker activities, and student shadowing in real classes. The day included conversations between present and future students, as well as presentations about extracurricular activities.

Samantha also volunteered for two weeks as a counselor at Bowers Farm summer camp, supporting younger children. Through an organization called Letters Against Isolation, she has written more than 150 letters to individuals in nursing homes facing challenges such as loneliness or dementia. Samantha has supported a variety of school events including fundraisers, bake sales, and eighth grade enrollment nights.

Olivia Moore

International Academy Okma, 11th grade

Nominator: Bethany Wilson—Detroit Zoo, Volunteer Supervisor



Olivia has been an active volunteer at the Detroit Zoo for more than two years. She has assisted with educational programs, helping to teach countless children and families about wildlife conservation and sustainability. Olivia has also supported animal care, including enriching their environments. She is a consistent and reliable volunteer, helping with special events, guest engagement, and exhibit maintenance.

Olivia also has coached young children in soccer, teaching skills and social development. In order to raise funds for the organization buildOn, which builds schools in developing countries, she has sold concessions at various festivals. As a co-president of the Period Club, she has worked to raise awareness around period inequality and organized fundraising efforts to provide hygiene products at school. Olivia has also volunteered at school events, such as bake sales and new student orientation, and volunteered for the Youth Action Board.

Hailey Lossia
Seaholm High School, 12th grade

Nominator: Katie Parker—Seaholm High School Community School Organizer



Hailey serves as co-president of the Seaholm Community Service Club and has been actively involved in the club through her high school years. She has organized and participated in various service activities, including the Strides for SOS 5K, gift wrapping for the Bottomless Toy Chest, and meal preparation for the Hope Warming Center. Hailey also helped organize meal kits for Birmingham Public School (BPS) families and made placemats for the BPS Veterans Day Brunch.

Over the summer, Hailey also served as a student volunteer at Trinity Health Oakland Hospital, assisting healthcare professionals and providing limited patient care. She was part of the Teen Service Team at Springhill Summer Camp, where she supported younger campers and helped maintain the campgrounds. As a member of several other Seaholm clubs,

Hailey has tutored, promoted mental wellness, and created charitable items such as cards and blankets for hospitalized children.

Danyah Maarouf
International Academy Central, 11th grade

Nominator: Megan Mitchell—International Academy Social Emotional Educator



Danya is the student leader of her school’s baking club. She teaches baking skills through student workshops, and the resulting baked goods are donated to first responders, medical professionals, and senior citizens. She also volunteers daily at break to run a bake sale to raise money for her school’s therapy dog—first to acquire the dog, and then to pay for ongoing food and medical costs. She has raised \$2,000 in the past year and \$4,000 cumulatively.

Danyah also recently spent more than 80 hours during a two-week period volunteering at a local hospital, helping direct visitors during a staffing shortage. As a volunteer soccer coach, she worked with 12-15 kids between three and five years of age, teaching them skills and keeping them physically active. She supported Forgotten Harvest by forming part of a team

that harvested 10,000 pounds of corn for families in need.

Alexandre Martins Mengele
Seaholm High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Frank Cardimen—Oakland University Professor



Alex worked with two other students to develop a financial literacy program aimed at helping high school students learn essential life skills such as budgeting, saving, and investing. Through workshops and a social media platform, Alex and his team have reached more than 100 students, providing them with valuable tools for financial independence.

Alex also has supported his school’s tutoring program, helping classmates with homework and test preparation. He helped orient incoming freshmen through the Make Me a Maple program, providing guidance and answering questions. Alex has helped younger kids improve their soccer skills as a volunteer coach with Evolve Technical Soccer Training. He has helped teachers at local schools prepare for the school year by organizing materials and setting up classrooms.

2025 Youth in Service Honorees — High School

Olivia Betanzos
Seaholm High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Anne Crowe—Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Church Outreach Coordinator



Olivia organized a charity drive to support children and families in Detroit during the holiday season. Along with three friends, she spent half a year raising \$3,000 for a Christmas Assistance Program offered through their church. Olivia and her friends organized a fundraising dance, held returnable can drives in multiple area communities, and also collected donated toys, clothing, and blankets. Through these efforts, they surpassed the record for the most toys ever donated to the Nativity of Our Lord Christmas program. With the average toy costing between \$10 and \$20, this fundraising effort contributed hundreds of toys to children in Detroit and relieved financial stress for families struggling during the holidays.

Olivia also volunteers every Saturday at the Cass-Costea, a free health care clinic in Detroit, helping with a variety of tasks including cleaning. She primarily supports patient families by watching children while their parents receive medical attention. Olivia enjoys spending time with the kids, often coloring with them and listening to their stories.

Alexander Chebl
Groves High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Kelly Michaud—Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition Youth Action Board Project Advisor



Alexander is an active volunteer with the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition’s Youth Action Board (YAB), an organization dedicated to raising awareness about teen mental health and substance abuse. He serves on the YAB's Executive Board as a Vice President. He attends every meeting, helps at many events and community meetings, and has recruited new members. Alexander was part of a YAB panel at a Seaholm PTA conference, speaking to more than 50 parents about parenting strategies to help teens cope with the pressures they face. He also supported the YAB Choices Youth Dialogue Day both as an organizer and a speaker, speaking with more than 80 students about mental health awareness.

Alexander also has served as a doctor's assistant at the Beaumont Hospital Athlete Heart Check. He has volunteered at multiple Science Olympiads, and he managed one of the stations at his former elementary school’s STEM fair.

Anabella Chebl
Groves High School, 9th grade

Nominator: Kelly Michaud—Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition Youth Action Board Project Advisor



Anabella is an active volunteer with the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition’s Youth Action Board (YAB). She serves on the YAB Leadership Board as a Community Outreach Officer, focusing on supporting the middle school students on the Mid Action Board. Anabella was part of a YAB student panel at a Birmingham parent presentation, sharing with 50 parents her insights on drug and alcohol use, teen mental health, and communication advice for parents trying to support their children. She also contributed to the YAB’s annual Choices Youth Dialogue Day, a gathering of more than 80 students, and has recruited new members to join the Coalition.

In addition, Anabella has also volunteered as a tutor at Berkshire Middle School’s Saturday School, participated in food drives, and created dog toys and Christmas stockings for charitable causes. She has supported events at Bingham Farms Elementary and organized

service projects at Groves High School.

Madeline Coon

Groves High School, 9th grade

Nominator: Elizabeth Sak—Groves High School, Community School Organizer



Madeline gives back through sharing her love of athletics with younger children. She has served as an assistant coach for seventh and eighth grade volleyball teams, as well as for a sixth grade intramural volleyball team. In these roles, she helped instruct players on essential volleyball skills such as passing, serving, and teamwork, while also assisting in setting up equipment, organizing warm-up drills, and deciding game lineups. Madeline also helped run the Hoops for Heart fundraiser, supervising and supporting students throughout the event.

In addition, Madeline volunteers for her school’s LINKS club, working to help special needs students feel more connected and valued by communicating and playing games with them.

Megan Gray

Seaholm High School, 9th grade

Nominator: Becky Compton—Mackinac Island Scout Service Camp Leader



Megan served as part of the Mackinac Island Scout Service Program during the Fourth of July Week. She served as a guide in the Fort and at the historic homes on Mackinac Island, welcoming guests and answering their questions, and helped clean up the park and trails. Megan hosted two special events for the State Park and the opening of a new Art Center. She served the state of Michigan with a positive attitude and raised and lowered the flags each day.

Megan also volunteered at Henry Ford Providence Hospital, where she assembled more than 700 welcome folders containing information helpful to incoming patients. She also prepared rooms in the endoscopy department and supported the director of volunteer services by organizing supplies and sorting materials. Megan volunteered at the hospital’s Christmas store, helping distribute gifts to more than 1,200 children from 350 families, and created “get well soon” cards for patients. Megan has also helped serve food to the elderly at St. Patrick’s Senior Center.

Coco Jelenic

Seaholm High School, 9th grade

Nominator: Lily Russell—Birmingham Girls Lacrosse



Coco is a volunteer coach for third and fourth graders in the Birmingham Girls Lacrosse program. She has helped coach 15 young athletes weekly, creating drills and running practices to improve their skills. Coco is a great mentor to the younger girls and has fostered not only their technical abilities, but also their confidence and love for the sport.

Coco also has volunteered with the Micah 6 organization in Pontiac, helping to grow and harvest fresh produce for local shelters. Inspired by this experience, she is now starting a Healthy Habits Society club to promote healthy living.

Kabir Kapur

Groves High School, 11th grade

Nominator: Elizabeth Sak—Groves High School, Community School Organizer



Kabir has been an active student leader and contributed to the community during his time at Groves. He has volunteered his time through the Groves Big Brother Big Sister Mentor Program and Generation of Promise. He has been a Groves Student Ambassador and offered tours to incoming students. Kabir also has tutored other students at Saturday School.

The Youth in Service program recognizes service to the student’s local community. However, Kabir and his brother also have made significant contributions in India through their non-profit, Help2Fight Hunger. Over the past year, they have focused on food and clothing drives, mental health initiatives, and support for acid attack victims. Other initiatives they have pursued in the past include facilitating braille classes and helping to create a braille library at a school for the visually impaired. They also organized drives to address equipment shortages at hospitals following the Covid 19 pandemic.

Kate King

International Academy Okma, 11th grade

Nominator: Frank Schmid—Matchan Nutrition Center, St. Vincent de Paul Society



Kate has volunteered at the Matchan Nutrition Center, a soup kitchen and marketplace. She began by baking cookies and muffins, which she served to more than 150 people in the soup kitchen. Kate then created a two-day summer camp for 20 children in the Pontiac community, chosen from families who shop at Matchan. Designed for children from kindergarten to eighth grade, the camp featured STEM experiments, helping children learn about science through hands-on experiences such as making paper rockets. The program also taught English skills for children who had recently immigrated from Spanish-speaking countries. The camp gave parents free childcare while they shopped for groceries.

Kate also volunteers at Corewell Health, initially in the Neuroscience Department and subsequently in the Emergency Department. She volunteers for the miRcore research program at the University of Michigan, where she spends Saturdays performing research on a neurological disease along with other students. She leads a chapter of this organization at her school and has participated in several successful fundraisers.

Ireland Kopsch

Groves High School, 12th grade

Nominator: Veronica Belf—Groves High School National Honor Society Advisor



As co-president of the National Art Honor Society at Groves, Ireland has coordinated and done presentations for multiple "Art as Therapy" events, in which the art students lead up to 40 community members in doing art and craft projects in support of mental health. Ireland also organized a rock-painting project, in which the honor society created more than 100 hand-painted rocks with encouraging messages for cancer patients. For March is Reading Month, Ireland painted fifteen windows at West Maple Elementary and supervised the other students who assisted with decoration.

Ireland also has served as a house manager and usher for St. Dunstan’s Community Theatre and the Groves Performing Arts Company, ensuring a smooth and organized experience for more than 200 attendees per show. Ireland has been a member of the executive board of LINKS, helping to foster inclusivity by facilitating lunches where students engage with the special education program. She also has organized academic tutoring programs.