

## Essay by Abigail Mihalic

Before discovering the values of *Serviam* through Ursuline, volunteering was not an activity I participated in regularly. While I always tried to have service in my daily life, I was not actively seeking opportunities to serve the larger community. During my first year at Ursuline, I volunteered in different ways by helping with Sunday school, special needs children, and the Pro-life movement. While I enjoyed each service project, I constantly searched for a type of service that I felt truly called to.

This year, I spent the bulk of my service volunteering as a camp counselor. During the first week of this past summer, I devoted 45 hours to a summer camp called Camp Jesus. The week-long camp for young kids is held at Mount Saint Michael Catholic School through a charismatic community called the Christian Community of God's Delight. I volunteered alongside other high schoolers mostly from the church's high school ministry which I attend. My family has been involved in this community for decades, so I was excited for the chance to grow closer to this tight-knit group of Christians while simultaneously supporting the children of the community through Camp Jesus.

I was grouped with four other girls, and together we led a group of adorable rising second-grade girls. During the week, my group of 12 girls would arrive in the morning and greet us with smiles and hugs while we sang and danced to praise and worship songs. Then, we would escort our girls to various activities like crafts, waterslides, and go-karts.

Campers also learned about Jesus and their faith. The camp's theme was Fishers of Men, so they learned how to apply the Apostles' courageous trust in following Jesus and doing his Work in their own lives. Through seemingly small but powerful actions like inviting a friend to church, praying daily, and treating all people as children of God, campers were empowered to be Fishers of Men in their own lives despite their young ages.

If I had to encapsulate my week of service into just three words, I would use humbling, faith-strengthening, and rewarding. While each day at camp consisted of many fun moments, constantly supervising my campers under the hot Texas sun proved to be quite difficult. My exhaustion at the end of each day made me realize how I had glamorized service. Once I understood the goal of selflessness, I strived to pour myself out to my campers and the other staff members each day with God's help. In the Camp Jesus environment centered around faith, I had the privilege of praying frequently, being mentored by older counselors, and deepening my faith daily. I discovered how fulfilling and energizing my service was when Jesus remained at the forefront of my mind.

Camp Jesus has been my most rewarding service project. Since many of Camp Jesus's campers use scholarships to reduce the camp's cost, my service helped provide an exciting and faith-building week for underprivileged kids. When my campers sported huge smiles after I sang them Disney songs, went on the waterslides with them, and gave them piggy-back rides, I felt as though I had received the most amazing present, and my heart was full of joy.

Through camp counseling, I have discovered my passion for serving children. I can learn from their unadulterated sense of joy as well as help shape their curious young minds. If I can offer friendship, guidance, support, faith, and happiness to a child, I believe that I will be helping them later in life to become incredible humans and followers of God. My week at Camp Jesus also revealed to me the most fundamental aspect of service. Through centering my service around faith, God can use me as his servant to be Christ-like to all people I encounter.