

Essay by Tia Taylor

I personally take my service further than just what's required, and my goal is to always to spread happiness, change lives, and grow in faith. The service project that I have been focused on, and I have been given the opportunity to serve is called Adaptive Recreation. Adaptive Recreation is a comprehensive recreational program that provides a variety of activities such as; fitness, crafts, fine arts and education, for kids and teenagers with physical and/or developmental disabilities. Helping, assisting and encouraging them to conquer their fears or insecurities, gain confidence, and achieve their goals has truly been rewarding for me beyond which my words can express.

Seeing the sheer joy as a student accomplishes a goal or the laughter over enjoying a skill that they never had the opportunity to encounter, just melts my heart. These kids are just like other kids, and just because they may look, speak, or think differently, does not mean they do not deserve the same chances in life. I have developed a particularly close relationship with a teenage girl named Ashlyn, and I will never forget the day she told me thank you for saving her life. When she said these words to me, I almost broke down in tears, because never would I have thought that I would have the capable of changing someone's life.

Every day I was blown away with how truly amazing and talented these kids are; their courage, their joy, and their pureness always leave me speechless. Through my faith, I was giving these kids hope and love, something that every child truly deserves at home, school, and wherever they may go. I was teaching them valuable life skills and how to grow in faith and most importantly love. This experience gave my life a new purpose to continue inspiring, and it also allowed me to continue in the mission of *Serviam*. It continues to teach me in life, it is not just about me, but it is about how we help others. The idea that I was achieving this truly made me happy. Nothing in the world will not come close to equaling the joy and happiness that I felt from serving people through my faith.

Through this service program, I have been changed and am continually developing into an educated, loving, faithful young woman. This service has taught me life lessons that I take with me each and every day and share with my friends and family. *Serviam* not only changes the lives of the people you serve, but it also shapes your own life and character. And everybody is called to serve because through *Serviam*, anyone can truly change lives and spread love. As stated in Galatians 6 verse 10, "*we have the opportunity, let us do good to everyone.*"

I believe life is a calling — a calling to serve and love, a calling for me and for you. Since attending Ursuline for about three years, I have sought to make it my mission to fulfill St. Angela Merici's vision through my service.