



August 23, 2019

Since August of 2016, St. Philomena students have visited Sophia's Kitchen every Tuesday afternoon during the school year, logging over 900 hours of service to the poor. Adult volunteers bring 3 to 4 students each time, and the eager students quickly set to work chopping vegetables, washing tables, serving food to the needy and assisting other volunteers. It's wonderful watching them learn and grow through the school year. They might be hesitant at first, but quickly they can confidently make a sandwich, wash a table and interact with a wide variety of people. The impact they have on the program is evident when they aren't able to attend! We miss the helping hands and happy laughter. They are all learning a servant's heart. We can see that in the Hunger Feast program they put together, where they explain to parents and grandparents who the poor are and how we can help make their lives better. The empathy they have learned is humbling. Many students choose to continue serving after graduation from St. Phil's, coming back each summer.

Beyond the service at the kitchen, Sophia's Kitchen also knows they are there to help us financially. If we put out a plea for canned goods, our shelves will be full within a week, and the money donated is a true blessing to our operating expenses. Most people love to help for a 'feel good' project, like donating the peanut butter we use, but we know they will joyfully help with our basis expenses, too. It is evident the children have learned from their good parents, who are always willing to step up to get things done. That might be a truck driver offering to haul goods, or an electrician installing a light, or the wonderful moms and dads who do all the driving and supervising. They all step up when there is a need. Sophia's Kitchen is blessed to have them coming again this year, and hopefully for many years to come. They are such a blessing!

God Bless,

Mrs. Claire Crone
Program Director Sophia's Kitchen
309-655-1578

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BUEHLER HOME

Christian Buehler Memorial

A Life-Care Retirement Center

3415 N. SHERIDAN ROAD

Peoria, IL 61604-1498

To: National Philanthropy Day Awards Judging Committee

Re: St. Philomena School – Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy Ages 5-17

A smile on a face, a kind word, having purpose are a few of the attributes our residents experience when the third grade class comes to visit on Fridays. Residents watch as the classmates walk in a single file line from their classroom to Buehler Home which is just blocks away. The coffee shop is set up as a satellite classroom in which allows interaction between the students and our residents. As you scan the room you can witness retired school teachers in their mid-eighties and early nineties experience what motivated them all their lives. For these moments their loneliness and worries seem to subside. Students are attentive to the residents' conversation. And the residents' are back teaching and counseling as they have their entire adult lives

Staff has witness the positive outcomes by this programming and have talked about how this could be expanded. Many retirement communities/nursing homes have explored and created programs with secondary education. St. Philomena's leadership and the caring, motivated students are perfect for such a program. Studies have shown that for many of those elderly boredom, worthlessness and loneliness are felt. This type of program as witnessed relieves those feelings experienced often by the elderly.

Besides the Friday visits, the students offer special engagements at most holidays. Holidays can be difficult for residents who have no family. These students create greeting cards and various crafts for our residents which are very much appreciated. Residents really do look forward to holidays as in the past these days could be very difficult and depressing.

The Buehler staff, like our residents, are grateful for this interaction. Our staff is committed to further develop programing with these students. Leadership at St Philomena is approachable and with their support many of our elderly will have purpose for the last years of their lives.

Respectfully,

Mike Mahoney
Chief Operating Officer

Amanda Draeger
Director of Activities

To: National Philanthropy Day Awards Judging Committee
From: Mary Ellen Ulrich, (Retired) IL State Board of Education, Homeless Liaison
Date: August 26, 2019
RE: Letter of Support for St. Philomena School award for Outstanding Youth Philanthropy

I am very happy to write a letter of support for St. Philomena School. The students work on various projects to help this community - collecting, working a fund raiser and whatever is needed to see a goal achieved. Included are many aspects of reaching out, a big one is their collection of food for Sophia's kitchen. The students also spend time collecting and donating items for other school children who need clothing, school supplies etc.

In my support letter I would like to focus on the Cap Stone project that the 8th graders work on for their entire year. This becomes not only a huge impact on those students that are involved, but also their own lives, and getting them ready and excited to become a teen and ultimately adult volunteer in our community.

The students begin in the Fall having adult community leaders come and speak to them on behalf of the organization they work for, or volunteer for. After hearing the organizations and their mission, the 8th graders then discern what organization would interest them, and how they could help. They are given a wide variety of organizations to choose to dedicate their time to. Organizations such as Cancer Center, Special Olympics, Homeless Families (through various agencies) Center for Prevention of Abuse, Pet Outreach, Center on Aging, Veterans, Sophia's Kitchen, Visiting Nurses, to name a few. On the approval of their teacher they are given an organization to work with for the school year. They work with an adult that is involved with this organization, interviewing adults or children that have been impacted by the organization; they also do the background work, and volunteer their hours. They begin to see how the organization operates and functions to help the clients, as well as our community. These students are excited beginning of their project and are excited to share with others what they have learned over the past months at the end of their project. Students keep a journal, do a written report to summarize their year out in the community with a specific organization and how it has impacted their lives. A few days before graduation, they hold an open house for school families come and meet the 8th graders and see what project they have worked on throughout the year. They are excited about their own projects as they show them off with boards and literature, and spending time explaining what they have done. Many of these students continue on after graduation, I am confident that St. Philomena students do impact our community with their giving and sharing. I personally have been a mentor for the last 4 years, and have 3 of my groups that are continuing on in helping homeless students and their families, by collecting and providing school supplies, warm coats or having a small fund raiser to provide scarves and gloves.

Students through this project work at the Cancer Center, the Red Cross, Veterans Day Care, Special Olympics, Blind Center, many organizations—they pick and choose what they are interested in, and how they can learn, observe, and help. I have had the pleasure to be involved in St. Philomena School for the past 6 years. These students are ready, willing and able to help. They love reaching out and doing what they can to help those that need that extra hand. I am proud of them, and so proud of how our 8th graders take this Cap Stone project to a whole new level.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at 256-5049.

Mary Ellen Ulrich,

Musical Director, St. Philomena School