

KAILEE THOMPSON—HOW SHE HELPS THE COMMUNITY

Throughout my years in school I have volunteered at many different events. Some I have really enjoyed, and others have not always been easy or fun but in the end I did feel a sense of purpose. I have been involved in local sports for as long as I can remember. Being involved with sports, I've always ended up volunteering and not only for sports. From coaching youth basketball "Hoop Stars", helping put on the coaches/referee concessions at FBHS Vern Piver Holiday Classic basketball tournament, helping at an Adopt a Pet for the Humane Society to doing a beach cleanup on a cold foggy day. I have always found myself volunteering and liking the feeling of helping and giving back to my community.

Probably the most significant volunteering I've done started when I was 9 years old. My mom signed us up to help at the Community Easter Dinner held at our local Presbyterian Church. This event is put on every Easter by our community members to help feed those who are less fortunate, or so I thought. I've volunteered at the church until I was 14 and the pandemic hit.

For 5 years, my mom, younger sister and I would buss and reset tables during the dinner. We would interact with people attending the dinner and strike up conversations with complete strangers. At such a young age my sister and I did not want to spend our Easter evenings anywhere else but at home emptying out our Easter baskets. Our mom would always tell us that one day we would appreciate what we were doing. We never realized what she meant until we got older. I learned quickly that the dinner which I figured was to feed the homeless wasn't that at all. Many of the people who came had no family and just enjoyed the company of others. There were even times that I would experience having even classmates of mine come to the dinner. This was a humbling experience for me and taught me that no matter what their circumstances people just need a little kindness, without judgment.

Any time I think of my future goals, I always find myself leaning towards a career that will help people. I plan on attending a 4 year college in the fall to study Psychology/Kinesiology. I would like to pursue a career in mental/physical health of others. I feel like my experience in volunteering has sparked an interest in giving back. Volunteering gives me a sense of accomplishment and has taught me many important lessons that I will carry with me throughout my life.