

I am proud to be a youth in Centennial and feel I have made impacts in various underserved and vulnerable communities. As much as the impact I have been able to make I have equally been rewarded. When choosing areas to serve I first thought about my strengths and hobbies, and searched for natural fits. I learned that there was a swimming pool at Hidden Brook Apartments, and the refugee children from Burma did not know how to swim and I love to swim. I also learned that Special Olympics was in need of volunteers to assist the athletes, and I was interested in learning more about people with disabilities.

Last summer I created a swim team for refugee and immigrant children living at Hidden Brook Apartments. My passion for swimming gave me the push I needed to get the project in gear. I started by writing a grant requesting \$100.00 to A.G. Wassenaar to fund the project. I recruited eight children referred by the resident coordinator, worked with them on pool safety and how to get to the edge of the pool. By the last swimming lesson five out of the eight children could swim at least two lengths of the pool and all of the eight children could swim long enough to get to the edge of the pool. Sometimes the parents would get in the water try to learn how to swim. This part was an especially rewarding experience because I saw parents motivated to better their lives and help their children with swimming skills. Throughout the summer I involved other youth from the community to join the swim team. The involvement of other Centennial youths exposed them to a variety of diverse cultures. I observed true determination of people to learn new things. I was also forced to be comfortable in uncomfortable situations like not sharing a common language, and being in neighborhoods that looked different than mine. This summer I will continue the swim team and bolster the number of children by inviting more youth from Centennial to join in the project.

My other community services projects include volunteering for Special Olympics events. This exposed me to a contagiously happy group of people that do not make assumptions. As I continue to volunteer I realize that the athletes are similar to me in multiple ways. My Special Olympics service made an impact on the community by increasing the athlete's participation in different activities as well as creating a sense of accomplishment within the athletes. My service work has improved the community as well as my outlook on the world.

