

A lady walked into the church; she looked tired and worn. I watched as she looked at the options presented by the food pantry. She took some vegetables and a few cans. I usually stayed in the back to sort cans, but I watched another volunteer walk up to the lady and ask if she needed any help. The interaction was short, but the gratitude in the lady's eyes was visible. As she walked out of the church, it dawned on me that that lady would be able to eat tonight and the next couple days because of the Food Pantry's act of service. Community service to me is putting other needs before your own, and noticing who or what needs help and how it can be done. In addition, community service is volunteering your time and energy to help others without expecting anything in return; and identifying and sharing your unique God given gifts to give back since we are not meant to live in isolation. I also believe that the heart of service matters since empathy is a key contributor. All in all, community service is a practice of humility for the purpose of the people around you, and realizing that the experience is beneficial to everyone. We grow from it, and consequently, others receive what they need. I learned to see other perspectives in life and to have compassion for the people around me. I learned the power of giving, whether it's giving a child their first bite of real food in days or cleaning a park so that people can more readily enjoy it. Community service is empowering the people and space around us to hopefully make the world even just a tiny bit better.

As current Student Body Vice President, I lead committees and help make decisions for our school and club in general. We value community service. I've contributed in multiple ways that have built my appreciation for the community around me. One such event is Fall Fest, where clubs set up fun games for the school and surrounding community to come join; we also had food trucks and bouncy castles. I volunteered my time to set up and take down the event, and help run the StuGo table. I love this event at the beginning of the year, because it brings together organizations, clubs and businesses from the surrounding area, teachers, parents, children, teens, and grandparents. Furthermore, I did my first out of school community service my sophomore year at my local Food Pantry. I have also participated in smaller service projects such as helping the non-profit, Feed My Starving Children, create meal packets for countries struggling with hunger. Other clubs that value community service that I participate in are Key Club and National Honor Society, and I have donated blood during our Blood Drives. A memorable and fun community service event is Wish Week. Chatfield comes together to grant children's wishes in Colorado who have or had a serious illness or disorder. We always sponsor one child, but we make a difference for many. I led committees for the event that planned spirit nights and days, as well as other fun activities to raise money such as a zumba class and an art competition. All the hard work pays off when we do one final celebration as a school during the Wish Week Assembly, which I help lead, and the family's smiles say it all. The joy we can provide someone's life warms my heart! However, my overall favorite community service that I have contributed to is Columbine's Day of Service. This past year Chatfield joined Columbine in their annual tradition in remembrance of the Columbine Shooting. We came together and did service projects. This outreach is especially personal to me since I understand its importance. I went through the STEM School Shooting, so I understand the residue such a memory can leave. That's why we use this day of service to clean that residue each year and show our love for our community. Ultimately, that's the heart of community service—love.

Thank you for all the service that the Ken-Caryl Ranch Foundation does to support the high school youth and families in the community. College is expensive, so I appreciate this opportunity, especially since my parents will be supporting three children in college next year. All in all, I look forward to furthering my academic career and continuing my contribution to community service wherever I go.