

Personal Achievement through Communal Service

In the show Friends, Joey Tribbiani once told his friend, Phoebe Buffay, that completely selfless deeds could not exist; there was always, he stated, some ancillary benefit allotted to the one who executed the deed. I initially thought this statement was bogus; how could all selfless deeds be selfish? I did not truly understand his argument until high school when I got involved in Relay for Life, a year-long American Cancer Society (ACS) fundraiser.

It began as an organization I joined on a whim, having no intention of contributing more than what was necessary to participate. However, when a family friend, Jacoby Kramp, was diagnosed with aggressive brain cancer, things changed for me. When the doctors diagnosed Jacoby, he was full of happiness and life; he was just the age of my youngest brother. He was the most athletic kid I've ever seen and had such an infectious smile. I couldn't shake the fact that my younger brother could have easily been the athletic, smiley kid diagnosed with cancer before turning thirteen; I decided to make Relay for Life a larger part of my life. I joined the fundraising committee my sophomore year, and in the following years, I began pouring all of my free time into the organization. Rather than brainlessly scrolling through TikTok or playing mindless video games, I was contacting local businesses for support and recruiting new members. And doing all of these things for Relay for Life felt good. Through Relay, I used my time for productive purposes, and I was able to help cancer patients in need. As an organization, we raised over \$75,000 for ACS--ranking us in the top 10 fundraising chapters for high schools in the nation. That summer, after being selected to be the President of the Relay for Life program, I traveled to the ACS On Campus Conference in Grapevine, Texas, where I networked with other ACS members and planned for the upcoming year. My committee and I set our goal for this year at \$100,000, which would be the most in the history of our high school. We dedicate a lot of time and effort to making this event a success; we know that the lives of many cancer patients rely on it. This year, we hope to see people from the community at our event. Feel free to join us on April 27th!

I never thought that Relay for Life would have the impact on me that it did. Through my involvement with Relay for Life, I learned how to allocate my time towards something bigger than myself; I have become a leader who can make change; I finally understand what Joey was trying to say in Friends. I now know that community service is the sacrifice of individual rewards for others' benefit; yet, it is also not a sacrifice. That is because community service allows the one who serves to receive the utmost gratification from his/her service. Being a part of Relay for Life is the most rewarding part of my life. As I move on to the next chapter of my life, I will continue my involvement in Relay for Life and constantly remind myself of how I can satisfy myself and others through community service.