

Community Hero

Growing up, heroes were always portrayed as a figment of the imagination. They were people who had powers that could do unimaginable things, inhuman almost. Heroes were people that others thought they could never be, but reflecting on the lives of Darryl and Ryan, this is not further from the truth. Darryl and Ryan both exemplified what it meant to be a true hero. They were a hero to their friends, family, and especially to their parents. From my point of view, they demonstrated that anyone can be a hero. Similar to the Tsatsos brothers, I attended St. Lawrence and later Notre Dame Prep, both of which gave me the opportunity to build education on a Catholic foundation. Through this, I was able to transform myself into an everyday hero in my community. A specific part of my community that comes to mind in which I see myself as performing heroic actions is my organization of the service project Books for the Brave.

This story actually begins my sophomore year of high school when I decided to finally immerse myself into theatre. While waiting my turn to audition for the spring play, a super bubbly girl named Gabby came and introduced herself. We quickly became friends and had a great time throughout the entire spring play. Gabby had recently just recovered from a super rare form of cancer that only four other people have ever been recorded to have. She lost the left portion of her jaw during the process, but her radiant spirit and her ability to power through enabled her to fight until she won the battle. A year later, she decided to start a charity called Books for the Brave. She asked me to help and I of course said yes. We organized fundraisers and collected donations to pay for new books and blankets to be delivered to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital for the patients to enjoy. Gabby said that the one thing she looked forward to was reading new books whenever she got to go to the hospital's library. My senior year, Gabby

had graduated and I felt the need to hold on to her legacy. I saw her as a hero and I knew that I needed to keep her movement going and be a hero to the children as well. As time went on, our organization's original source of funding was cut and I needed to find a new financial outlet fast. I went door to door and called almost everyone I knew so that I could supply the hospital's needs for new books and blankets. Christmas was coming fast and I finally obtained the money needed to move forward with the process and quickly bought the material needed to make the blankets. I organized a blanket making session after school and the great generosity of the Notre Dame Prep community helped me make thirty blankets for the patients! I stopped by Barnes and Noble and purchased some books for the patients and made my way to Ann Arbor for the delivery. As I walked into the library, some patients were there and were ecstatic to see new blankets and books. The smiles on their faces seemed to melt away the struggles that they were enduring in a chance of serendipity. They hugged me and thanked me for the donations and quickly ran to pick out which blanket would be theirs to keep. In that moment I felt a warm rush of pure joy knowing that I was bringing them an escape from their pain. I felt for a moment what it was like to be a hero in someone's life. Sure, my involvement in Student Council, athletics, and other extracurriculars make me happy, but you never know true joy until you are using your talents and abilities to bring joy into other's lives.

Being a hero in a community isn't always easy, but it's always simple. If you bring joy into someone's life, you are a hero. If you can make someone smile for just a moment, isn't it all worth it? As I graduate in the midst of a great pandemic, I witness heroes every day. Healthcare professionals putting their lives on the line, grocery store employees making sure people are able to access essential items, and teachers changing their curriculums on the fly and still providing

education to the youths around the world. Darryl and Ryan were true examples of what it meant to be a hero, and it is hard to compare anything to the sacrifices they made and the impact they had on their community. However, both of them demonstrated how heroes are all around us, and they are who bring us all together and illustrate true humanity and love for all of us to see.

