



PHOTO BY SAMANTHA PTASHKIN

Lisa Horcher, the BHS Student Volunteer Program Coordinator

Student Volunteering Victories

BARRINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HELP OTHERS WITH PASSION AND CREATIVE VOLUNTEERING SOLUTIONS

EACH SCHOOL YEAR, Barrington High School students will spend between 20,000 and 25,000 hours volunteering in our community. Quintessential Barrington talked with Lisa Horcher, the BHS Student Volunteer Program Coordinator, about the importance of giving back to the community and how students have stepped up to make a positive impact during the pandemic.

QB: *What is your role as the BHS Student Volunteer Program Coordinator?*

LH: My role is to connect students with the community through volunteering. I'm constantly looking for opportunities in the community and sharing the information with our students. In addition, I track all student volunteer hours and assist them with awards, recognitions, and possible scholarships that they can receive for

volunteering. We also recently partnered with the Barrington Area Volunteer Connection, which helps connect adult volunteers with organizations in our community.

QB: *What are some of the community organizations BHS student volunteers work with during the school year?*

LH: Through the years some of the most popular community organizations include Citizens for Conservation, Barrington Area Conservation Trust, Barrington Giving Day, House of Hope, Smart Farm, Cuba Food Pantry, The Community Meal, and Willow Creek Care Center. There are so many great organizations in our community. Students can volunteer with just about any nonprofit and in a typical year there are also many opportunities at the Barrington 220 elementary and middle schools.

Student Volunteers Get Creative During COVID



HOPE AND HARMONY

Maya Zahir (BHS '24) and Ayisha Patel (BHS '22) Sisters Ayisha and Maya Patel founded Hope and Harmony in 2018. The organization brings the joy of music into long-term care facilities, homeless shelters, assisted living facilities, and more by performing a mix of genres with a variety of instruments. When the pandemic hit, the sisters had to figure out how to bring music into these facilities without being there physically. In December 2020, they got together with several other BHS students and Hoffman Estates Conant High School students to create a virtual holiday concert. For more information, visit: hopeandharmony.info.

QB: *Is volunteering a graduation requirement?*

LH: No, it's not a requirement, but if students volunteer, they can earn up to one credit on their official high school transcript. Each year, nearly 70% of all BHS students find themselves looking for opportunities to support the Barrington area community. Volunteering is a wonderful way for our students to learn to give of themselves to their community, make new friends, and interact with a diverse set of people. It's also a great way for students to establish job contacts in the community and explore different career options they may be interested in pursuing.

QB: *How has the pandemic impacted volunteer opportunities for students?*

LH: This past year has proved to be a challenge, as the pandemic has limited the number of opportunities. But students have taken it all in stride by getting creative. One student started a nonprofit that sews face masks. Other students have joined nonprofit tutoring organizations that help tutor younger students virtually. It has been extremely impressive to see how our young adults have stepped up during this difficult time. 



PEN PAL SOCIAL

AJ Giacomin (BHS '22), Jessica Giacomin (BHS '20) and Julia Giacomin (BHS '18)

The Giacomin siblings started Pen Pal Social in the summer of 2020, after their grandparents passed away from COVID-19. They were inspired to help local senior citizens combat loneliness and isolation by connecting them with new friends through letter writing. Volunteer writers partner with senior citizens across the United States and Canada. For more information, visit: <https://www.penpalsocial.com/>



SKULLS AND DRILLS

Ranya Sharma (BHS '22) & Rhea Sharma (BHS '20)

Sisters Rhea and Ranya Sharma founded Skulls and Drills in 2018, after their mother faced a life-threatening subdural hematoma, requiring two immediate surgeries. Their organization aims to make brain surgeries possible for those who need surgery, but cannot afford it. This past year they switched gears to contribute to the COVID-19 relief effort. Ranya sewed more than 200 masks and distributed them to members of the community, as well as Northwest Community Hospital. They also created cards for a memory care facility in the area. For more information, visit: <https://skullsanddrills.org/>

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