

Jimmy Brazell Community Impact Scholarship Award

2017 Essay submission written by Ellianna Chouteau

Hello, my name is Ellianna Chouteau and I am thirteen years old. I just got home from attending TeenPact for the first time in Jefferson City, Missouri. There I learned about the National Convention and the scholarship we can receive for doing an essay about what we have done to help our community. I love TeenPact and would love to continue on this spiritual and governmental journey.

The first thing that I want to share is how I helped people in the world. My parents were missionaries for the first few years of my life with Youth With A Mission and I have been all over the U.S and to seven different countries in all. When I was eleven years old my whole family went to the Dominican Republic for a mission's trip in 2014. I loved it when we were there and we visited the widows and the orphans like it says to do in the Bible, in James 1:27. "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world." We loved and cared for these women and children by feeding them, giving them baseball gear, and most importantly sharing the Gospel with them.

My dad is an insurance agent and works with retirees. Since this job has him working with older people, he started to recognize that many of these people were widows or widowers. Also my neighbor Miss Dee was a widow and we saw that she needed help with things that she couldn't do, because she was too old, but that my dad could do things like fixing the back door screen or changing the light bulbs. Because of my neighbor and dad's clients our family started a non-profit organization called Widow Wednesday 8 years ago. My dad usually took off Wednesdays off of work to help them. We help widows and widowers with "handy man" tasks that they couldn't do themselves. We now have over two hundred widows and widowers in the greater Kansas City area that we can help every Wednesday. This, I know, is something that anybody can do if they just have the right mind set, to help others before themselves.

"See a need, fill a need." I think that being a part of my families nonprofit is something I will always do. I think that loving and serving the widows is something very important that I do in my community. Helping these people isn't just about getting candy from them, which I admit is always nice. My favorite thing is that I get to show Jesus through myself loving on the widows. I love seeing the smile on their faces and the tears in their eyes because they know that someone out there is not trying to get their money for helping them but that they have genuine love for them. And when they don't know what to say but they hug me, and that tells me everything that I need to know. When they say to come back, because they get so lonely in their homes all day long, I can't wait for my next visit. This is what I love about helping

these widows and widowers. They will always have a very special place in my heart that nothing else could replace. Every year Widow Wednesday has different types of events that I get to help with. We have the Valentines Day event where friends help us deliver a rose to all our widows. This year we did something extra special at our home for about 20 of them. We pampered them for the day with chair massages, makeup touchups, painted their nails and ate lots of yummy food. We have the National Widow's Day event where we have a certain theme. We treat them to a special meal that goes with the theme ,have a dance and a silent auction with various things to sell to raise money for the ministry. In the fall we have the rake day where people volunteer to rake many of these widows' yards. We have the Christmas Day event where we have more volunteers that go caroling to all of the widows and widowers and we give them each a goody basket.

Not only do we meet the widow and widowers physical needs we also meet (their) emotional needs as well. We set up grief seminars and grief support groups where the widows can meet each other and learn how to let Jesus help them through the different stages of grief. Last year on Valentine's Day, People Magazine interviewed us and wrote an article about our Valentine rose deliveries. Widows all over the nation contacted us and asked us if there was a Widow Wednesday group near them because they needed supported. That showed us how these widows need emotional and physical needs met no matter how long its been since their spouses have passed on. We have a Facebook page that has 10,000 widows all over the nation, following the posts of hope and support we want to give them. Even though we aren't ready to expand to other cities we have influenced friends all over the country to start reaching out to the widows they have in their own community. It brings me such joy to hear what they have started to do.

A few years ago on Christmas Day my parents gave my siblings and me each one hundred dollars. They told us that we could do whatever we wanted to do with that money. They said that they would be very, very proud if we helped someone else instead of spending it on ourselves. That week we each decided on what we were going to do with this money. This was the most money any of us had ever had before. My sister gave to a pro-life clinic and to single moms that were struggling. My brother gave to missionaries, crisis pregnancy centers, and humanitarian organizations. And I decided that I was going to make "homeless bags". In a bag I put a five dollar QuikTrip card, water bottle, beef jerky sticks, chicken salad cans, snacks, gum and depending on the weather some hats and gloves for winter or more water for summer. Each time that my mom and I saw a homeless person on the side of the road we would hand out a "homeless bag" to them. I might not be able to help everyone in the state of Missouri but I love what I do. Even though I might not be preaching on the streets or going around passing out Bibles, I want to share the love of Jesus with everyone.- Elli C. ❤️