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Service

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Terry and Camielle are two of many graduating seniors whose career aspirations are built as much around giving of themselves as receiving a paycheck.

Often, those teens are getting a head-start on their careers by performing volunteer duty related to their planned professions. For example, Terry volunteers weekly with developmentally disabled people of all ages through a Perinton Parks and Recreation Department program, "Friends and Fun."

"I feel they teach me, more than I teach them," she said. "They're always having such a great time. I think more people should love life like that — not being in a hurry all the time and trying to make more money than the other person."

Meanwhile, Camielle currently volunteers as a music tutor at Nazareth Hall, an elementary school located near Nazareth Academy in Rochester. She has been inspired through volunteering at a day-care center in Rochester, she said.

"I always enjoyed it. These kids depended on me to be there," she said. "They liked it when I showed up."

Erika Szymanski, also, has a deep-rooted desire to serve others. She plans to carry that goal through a profession considered quite prestigious — medicine. Only 16 years old, Erika will graduate in June as valedictorian at Our Lady of Mercy High School. She will attend Grove City College, Pa., next school year to pursue a career in immunology.

"I have an aptitude that, perhaps, allows me to help someone. I can't help but do that," said Erika, a parishioner at Church of the Resurrection in Perinton. "With the gifts comes a certain responsibility. God didn't give those gifts to keep all for yourself. I obviously want to make money, too, but that isn't the primary consideration."

Although Erika has considered becoming a researcher, she said she's leaning toward work that would bring her in more direct contact with patients. Erika said she very much sees that role as a form of service.

"I can't do (medicine) without seeing how it impacts lives. There's a lot of personal satisfaction that you helped someone directly," said Erika, a recipient of a National Merit Scholarship. The honor, given to students with outstanding academic records who also score high on qualifying tests, is accorded to only 1,200 high-school seniors across the country.

Erika said that working with patients going through different stages of suffering is a challenge that she hopes to meet successfully.

"With the good you have to take the bad," she said. "You have to have faith. I will try my hardest to help them the best that I can, but if I can't help them, then I would hope and pray there's someone else who can."

Another Rochester-area National Merit Scholarship winner, Christopher Evans, plans to make a difference through medicine as well. The McQuaid Jesuit senior will attend the College of Charleston, S.C., this fall in the hopes of becoming a doctor. To help prepare for his career, Christopher has volunteered over the last two years with Perinton Volunteer Ambulance.

"I'm thinking of doing research, becoming an endocrinologist," said Christopher, 18.

Inspired to serve

A family disease is one of the forces driving Christopher toward a career in medicine. Christopher is a diabetic, and he said that his father has lived with the effects of diabetes for close to 30 years.

Christopher said he hopes to play a part in finding a cure for diabetes. The disease, in its undiagnosed or uncontrolled form, is characterized by excessive hunger, thirst and discharge of urine, as well as weight loss. Christopher noted that diabetics often must take regular medications and follow strict diets to control the proper amount of sugar in their bloodstream.

"Some of them can't eat whatever they want. They start feeling horrible," he said. He added that if diabetics stray from their diet, "it could kill you."

"If I could participate in finding a cure — wow. It would help so many people," he said. "It would be so much easier for them; they'd have so much less to worry about."

In the same way that Christopher was led toward his career by a family experience, Camielle from Nazareth Academy said her love for children sprang from the example of her mother. Camielle explained that her mom temporarily cares for young children in their Rochester neighborhood when the parents are unable or unwilling to provide care.

"She has taken in any unwanted child that she possibly can. I've never seen her turn anybody away," Camielle said.

Terry said that her career path was influenced by her grandmother, who was a special-education teacher and seemed to



Camielle Bradley passes out hats to the Select Choir students, for a number they were rehearsing.

like her job greatly. And Gianina Rogers, as well, credits a family member with spurring her interest in special education: Her aunt has adopted several handicapped children.

Gianina, 18, will attend the University of Maryland this fall to pursue a degree in education. She said that if she doesn't go into special education, she might instead work with children in the psychological unit of a hospital. The Geneva DeSales High School senior acknowledged that her career path is not suited for everyone.

"You have to be patient, definitely. You have to be understanding, and have a sense of humor, too," said Gianina, a parishioner at St. Stephen's Church in Geneva. She currently volunteers at a day-care center for children in low-income families.

According to Carole Morrell, director of guidance at Elmira Notre Dame High School, volunteer duty plays a big part in leading teens toward a career of service.

"It lets that seed grow," Morrell said. Morrell noted that a group of Elmira Notre Dame teens spent their Easter break assisting residents of Nazareth Farm, a poor rural community in West Virginia.

"The experience they had at Nazareth is a life-changing experience," said Morrell, who maintained that "down the line" the trip could play a part in the career choices of some students.

What about money?

But for now, Morrell said, many seniors are focused on individual success.

"They're more concerned with getting into college. I don't think they necessarily hear this other message," Morrell commented. "Of course, our messages from society are get the best job, make the most money, go to the best university."

"That's what they hear they're supposed to be doing," agreed Doreen Goossen, director of guidance at Nazareth Academy. "They're feeling it from their parents, they're feeling it from their peers."

Goossen said that when students seek her help in researching a career, "The

first thing they say is, where do I find out how much money I make?"

Morrell said that it takes a concerted effort to get students to realize where true happiness may lie.

"I try to get them to look at experiences in their lives that have made them happy. For the most part they come to the understanding that helping others is what makes them happy — if they will go that far," Morrell said.

Yet Morrell and Goossen also said that teens shouldn't be led toward careers of service against their will, any more than they should be influenced toward higher-paying professions.

"I feel like a majority of them want to be happy doing what they're doing. But whether they can be happy serving others, maybe that's not the most important thing to them. Maybe they're more happy making money," Morrell remarked.

"If it sounds in their heart they want to do (a certain career), that's the route I want them to go," Goossen said. "If they value earning a lot of money and that's the most important thing, then maybe it's a good idea for them to get into computers or engineering. But if their heart is telling them 'I want to teach or do social work,' then that's where I guide them."

"It goes back to what you see as riches, and what's important to you," Goossen added. "Do you want to be rewarded monetarily, or in other ways? It's what's going to make you happy, and that comes back to the individual."

Marie Claus, youth minister at Assumption Parish in Fairport, said she supports teens who seek monetary success — as long as they remember that the world is full of people who aren't so fortunate.

"I feel very strongly that we should encourage young people to be the best they can be, if they're bright and can get into a good school," Claus said. "There's nothing wrong with wanting to make \$200,000. But there also comes sharing and supporting programs for people who are not as lucky. One way to be thankful is to do something about it. When it comes time to give back, do you reach into your pocket?"

Gianina acknowledged that it's important to consider the potential income that her special education career goals might yield.

"Money's definitely good. I like money," she said. "But I'm also doing something rewarding and knowing that I'm helping someone."

Terry, for one, said she doesn't mind the fact that teaching doesn't offer as much money as some professions. For her, being passionate about her career is the top priority.

"Every day I want to be like, 'Yeah, I want to go to work!'" Terry said.

With such a long road ahead, and so many difficult choices to make, Camielle said she will leave her career path up to a higher authority.

"In my heart, I know God will guide me to what I'm supposed to do," Camielle said.

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