

Learning to Serve

In Each Grade, Students Practice Helping Others



**Melanie Mildrew,
SGS Director
of Outdoor and
Community Service
Programs**

Saint George's has a long history of service.

We were one of three schools that piloted Joya's (formerly the Guild School's) penny drive and have been dedicated to ongoing support of this cause. SGS is 2nd Harvest's biggest food drive in the fall, raising 2,054 lbs. of food in 2020. This makes a great impact when temperatures change, the holidays are upon us, and the need in the community increases.

These are two of our annual drives led by different students each year. In addition, SGS students support other causes that come and go depending on their enthusiasm. It is important to support what students are passionate about so that we make a true difference in our community.

We start teaching service in the Lower School through classroom themes. Each classroom decides what is age appropriate

and fitting for their students and then creates opportunities to develop this foundation of giving back to our greater community. This year has required some rethinking of what we normally do. For example, the 2nd grade classroom usually reads to the preschool students at Green Acres. We were unable to do such a trip, so this fall we read to their students via Zoom. It was not the same, but the Green Acres kids loved having the experience of being able to connect to students outside of their community.

In the Middle School, we do theme days for each grade with the themes connecting the students to more in-depth learning and some service activities built into the curriculum. The 6th grade theme is River Connections, and we started this year by testing the water quality of the Little Spokane River and the creek by the Middle School. Later in the year, they will raise trout to be reintroduced into local lakes and explore how healthy water ecosystems matter for fish.

The 7th grade theme is Water Warriors. They look more at how we interact with water and how to create new and maintain existing healthy riparian watersheds.

The 8th grade theme is Helping Humanity. They learned about former refugees in Spokane and what our local organizations are doing to make their transitions into our community successful. Later they will also look at homelessness in Spokane.

These are big issues, and this serves as an introduction. The community service experiences our students have in their Lower and Middle School years are a great introduction and practice for what they will do during their years in the Upper School.

Students in the Upper School are required to do service as part of their graduation requirement for CAS (creativity, activity, and service). The International Baccalaureate defines service as a “collaborative and reciprocal engagement with the community in response to an authentic need.” It is important for our students to recognize what

needs there are in our community and how to respond in an effective way.

This push to engage is important so that our students are putting themselves out there and recognizing what service is. At first this seems hard, but I see amazing growth in our students from freshman year to their junior and senior years. The students are applying to be on teen boards for such organizations as the Ronald McDonald House and Joya, or championing causes they are passionate about such as the blood drive, the food drive, suicide awareness, Day of Silence, human trafficking, Operation Christmas Child, Everlasting Envelopes, etc. It is my privilege to support them while navigating this journey.

Service is a choice and those who participate gain more for themselves. Study after study points to the power of service to combat depression. At times like these, this is what we should put our focus on.

— Melanie Mildrew, SGS Director of Outdoor and Community Service Programs

“It is important for our students to recognize what needs there are in our community and how to respond in an effective way.”



Clockwise from upper left: 2nd graders reading to friends at Green Acres preschool, boxes for Operation Christmas Child recipients, 6th grader testing water quality in the Little Spokane, painting Food Drive signs