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STORIES OF SERVICE

Service by Webster's definition is an act of helpful activity. Why are we as a human race driven to the idea of lending a hand to those around us? Why do we take the time to stop and hold the door open for a man on crutches? Why do we give our time and energy to perfect strangers? My answer to these questions is not just because it is the "right" thing to do but because of Matthew 25:40, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Ethically, I know that service from the smallest action of a smile that brightens a stranger's day to the giving of a part of you is what I should do. I don't have the answers to why some of us are born with incurable diseases or why in a matter of seconds a person's life is changed forever because of a tragic accident, but I do know that joy and happiness can be found in the midst of it all. Families are drawn together. Strangers stop to help. Lives are changed. The Children's Miracle Network provides the opportunity for stranger's lives to cross whether it is a one time meeting or a long time relationship. Some people get uncomfortable when they walk through the doors of a hospital. Others like myself feel safe and at home there. Being part of an organization devoted to helping support a Children's Hospital takes my passion for medicine and marries it to my passion for serving people. After learning of this organization on campus it was never a question of if I would be a part of it but merely the question of when. My first experience with CMN was at the 2007 Dance Marathon. The flame we lit that night never stopped blazing for me. Over the last year Dance Marathon became an intimate part of every aspect of my life. Webster was right when he used the word act in his definition of service. These two words go hand in hand with each

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other. I have been around the world and back serving people of every race in every way possible. DM draws me in because it is here, it is everyday life, it provides for people I know directly. Kristina, a beautiful, young, life-filled 19 year old, fell into my life just a few months ago. She was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis at birth. Her first hospitalization due to the disease came at age 13 and she has been in and out of the hospital ever since then. With 20% lung function and denial for a lung transplant her prognosis is not good. I pray that God gives her breath for today, tomorrow, and far into the future. Her family is a joy to be around. Even in the dismal atmosphere of a hospital room laughter breaks the silence and smiles brighten the darkness. What an amazing example this family is. They have taught me to remember how precious life is and that every moment should be lived to the fullest. In Kristina's mind she was not dealt a bad hand, she was just dealt her hand. Providing a platform for her mother's heart to be heard and Kristina's story to be told is the least I can do for this family that gives so much to me. "Pay it forward" is a phrase that has become common to our society. Part of my desire for DM and its support of CMN is my health. I have been blessed with great health and for that I "pay it forward" to those who have been dealt another hand. For me, every tear drop, every bead of sweat, and every second of time given is all made worth it as I glance at my desk at the picture that right in the middle written in crayon by the tiniest hand says "Thank you." That picture, that thank you reminds me that 12 hours standing is nothing compared to the days that turn into weeks that turn into months where a child lies helpless in a hospital bed. Doctors and nurses constantly in and out. Tests that hurt, and surgeries that leave them weak. DM provides these days, and weeks, and months with a little more joy and a little more comfort. Though the amount of money raised may seem trivial to a multi-million dollar hospital the thought that someone cares reaches deep into the lives of these families. Chris's memory lives on and his story will continue to be told even in his passing. Hannah will year after year bring her bubbly personality to dance marathon and blow the minds of the people around her by her courage and her ability to find joy in today. DM gives these families a voice so that maybe, just maybe, one day other families will not have to suffer from the loss of a child, something no parent should have to go through, or have to explain to their eight year old child that they cannot go out and play with the other kids because their immune system is too weak. So I ACT. I take Webster's definition and I put it into practice. Every day is a good day to impact a life! Have you impacted one today?