

# Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2017

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Our Lady of Visitation

## How Has the Gift You Received From God Been Put to Use for the Benefit of Other Persons?

If you would ask people what gifts I have, they would say a lot of things. Maybe something like a good friend, softball pitcher, swimmer, a soccer player, a student, and a lot of others. But in the summers of 2014 and 2016, I went on mission trips to Winslow, Arizona, and I learned something about myself that I never knew before. The mission team and I did many things to help the homeless, the Navajo Indians on the reservation, and the Red Sands Church and the school. We ultimately went there to show Jesus' love. It was on these two trips that I realized that God had given me the gift of service.

My first mission trip took place in the summer of 2014, and I was 10 years old. I was the youngest member on the team, and everyone else was at least 15 years old or older. 1 Timothy 4:12 says, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." But things were a little different on the second trip. In the summer of 2016, there were three girls younger than me, one of which was my sister, on the team. I feel as if I might have inspired them by showing them that your age doesn't matter, and that God is using them to do great things already.

On the trip, I put my gift of service to use by helping the homeless. Many of them were of Navajo descent. I helped pack lunches that included new white socks, a toothbrush and toothpaste, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, an apple, a bag of chips, and a rice crispy treat. We loaded them all onto a bus and started driving around looking out for people that might need a lunch. Many of the homeless people were so grateful for the lunch, and they prayed with us. One man I particularly remember was sitting outside of a McDonald's. We went up to him and asked if he would like a Big Mac. He said yes, and we ran inside to go get him one. He devoured it, and we started a conversation. He told us about how he missed his family and especially his kids, and he asked if I would pray for him. I was very nervous because usually the adults prayed, but since he asked me I said I would. I prayed for his family, his health, and that he would never lose trust in Jesus. After that, I gave him a hug. It was an amazing!

The next day, the mission team prepared a meal of spaghetti and meatballs for the homeless. We drove around on the bus and picked up as many homeless people as we could find. We brought them back to the place where we were preparing the meal and we served them. I brought them their food, and asked what they would like to drink, and brought it to them. I had conversations with them, we sang songs, and I realized they are not any different from me.

Some people on the mission team cut the homeless people's hair, and painted the girls' finger nails. My sister and I passed out beaded bracelets that we made to share the gospel story. Each bead on the bracelet had a different meaning. The black bead means that we are imperfect and sinful; The red bead showed Jesus' blood that he shed for us; The green bead means that we will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Jesus Christ; The white means that we are forgiven from our sins; The blue bead means that God gives us grace; The yellow bead means that we will live with Jesus forever in heaven. It was amazing! I was actually telling people about the gospel! I will never forget that day when I learned that God gave me the gift of service and what it really means.

I did many other service projects while I was in Arizona. For example, I helped build a church for the Red Sands Church. I did this by helping put up the walls. Also, I helped get Red Sands Christian School ready for the upcoming school year. I did this by picking weeds in the playground area, and I helped get the classrooms back into order. There was a big field of

shrubs and bushes behind the school building when we we started, but when we finished, there was a gigantic baseball field behind the school. It took a lot of hard work, but I knew that the kids that would be playing on it, would be so happy. In Arizona, the mission team and I held a VBS, or a vacation bible school, in the park for two days. Kids of all ages came to it, and I was so excited that I could teach them about God. During the VBS, I sang songs with them and helped the kids do a craft that taught them that they are all unique and children of God.

I know that this was an experience that I will never forget. I am very thankful for what I have because now I know that some people aren't as fortunate as I am. Before these two trips I had no idea that God had given me the gift of service. But I do know that God has given me this gift for a reason, and I hope I can do more things in the future to benefit others with my gift. Even today as I put on my shoes, I will ask God to use me to bring peace, good words, and the hope of salvation to those I meet. Isaiah 52:7 says, "How beautiful upon the mountains, are the feet of him who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God Reigns!'"