

Meera Krishnan

### YLDP Service Project Essay

For the YLDP service project, I completed part of the hours with the Houston Food Bank with my team members and the remaining part of the hours through a service project I have been volunteering for since June of 2019. I volunteered at the Houston Food Bank on February 16<sup>th</sup> for four hours and the experience was enlightening and very meaningful. I learned about the many tiresome processes which go into making the food bank and its distribution of food run smoothly. First, the packaging of the food must be checked for expiration dates and then disinfected, then sorted into types of food and drink as well as sorted into bulk and regular distribution. Following that, the items are sorted into food packages which organizations request. I performed two tasks with a YLDP teammate, both of which included sorting through the food and trying to minimize the food waste as best as possible. Food waste and disposal of it is one of the food bank's most expensive aspects, and thus, a lot of procedures were in place to reduce food waste. When given instructions, I made sure I listened attentively and followed those directions closely. A lot of coordination and good communication between people is required in order for processes at the Houston Food Bank to go smoothly. I took it upon myself to ask as well as answer any questions to aid those around me.

Secondly, I have been volunteering with the organization Village Book Builders (now Invictus Institute) since June of 2019 and have continued to do so up until March when the service had to stop due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of my service, I tutor elementary and middle school children in Ahero, Kenya online through Skype for an hour every week. I have rarely missed my weekly tutoring sessions because teaching the kids and nurturing their education is extremely important to me. Whenever possible, I schedule more classes with the

children because I enjoy helping them learn. As a leader, it is important to be able to solve problems quickly, and I had to step into this role in order to fix an issue. When I first began tutoring the kids in Ahero, Kenya, I was not able to tutor them on a regular schedule due to numerous power outages occurring every day and poor connectivity. After deliberating on this problem, I figured a generator would work well in their case of frequent power outages. I contacted the organization through which I was volunteering and decided to create a GoFundme account to raise funds for the purchase of a generator. The volunteering organization liked the proposal and supported my efforts and we helped the school procure a generator, allowing for a trouble-free tutoring experience. The volunteering experience is extremely rewarding, and I am so happy to be able to give back to these kids, nurture their learning, and see them prosper.