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EHS senior goes beyond the call-of-duty to help community

by Lauren Dietrich Jul 24, 2018



Students of Service (S.O.S.) members partnered up with Lutheran and Family Service in North Omaha to help move furniture into the homes of Nepal refugees.

Roughly \$46 billion is awarded in scholarship money to graduating United States seniors every year. This past spring, Christine Jacha of Elkhorn High School was one of these many recipients. She was awarded \$1,000 in the form of the Omaha Trail Blazer Scholarship; however, these dollars have more meaning attached to them than others.

The Trail Blazer Scholarship is awarded to a student who created a project with the intent of having a positive effect in the world, and after the 2018 school year, Jacha proved to do just that.

After an entire childhood of living in Zimbabwe, Jacha moved in 2012, at the age of 13, to Arizona with her parents, Stanford and Tanya Jacha, and three brothers, Panashe, Garth and Kundai.

“We moved for better opportunities in life – the American dream,” she said.

After a little time to transition to life in the United States, Jacha moved to Elkhorn as an eighth grader and started school at Elkhorn Middle School.

Jacha went on to attend Elkhorn High School, where she participated in numerous clubs and sports. Yet, it wasn't before the summer going into her senior year of high school that Jacha decided to make a real impact at Elkhorn High.

“I wanted to start helping the community as best as I could, and I didn't want to wait until a war or something like that just to help people. I wanted to do something, anything, that I thought would be good enough,” Jacha said.

After reading a book about oppressed women called Half the Sky Movement by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Jacha found her inspiration.

“Reading the book made me think about my life in Zimbabwe and how it was. In a sense, it just opened my eyes again, to not ignore that,” Jacha said.

Jacha spoke to her fellow Elkhorn High peer, Julia Young, about her vision, and she jumped right on board. Together, with the approval of Principal Dan Radicia, the girls co-founded the club Students of Service (S.O.S.) at Elkhorn High; a student led club that focuses on volunteer work and helping the Elkhorn and Omaha community.

“We wanted to help people by not just giving them stuff, but by also getting to know them and their story,” Jacha said.

Jacha set up meetings every Tuesday for 20 minutes in homeroom, where members of the S.O.S. would discuss volunteer opportunities. Throughout the year, Jacha recruited roughly 50 members to join the S.O.S. and led multiple volunteer projects and campaigns. One of the biggest projects the group participated in was teaming up with Lutheran and Family Services in February of 2017. Jacha and several members of the S.O.S worked with the organization in North Omaha to help move furniture into refugees’ homes from Nepal.

“It was different actually being with them and seeing what their lives are,” Jacha said.

Jacha and her club ran multiple other projects to help the community throughout the school year, including a donation drive for Hurricane Harvey and a fundraiser for the organization The Bridge in Fremont, to help people who have been abused, domestically or sexually.

Jacha ended the year running the Kindness Campaign, a campaign to spread love throughout Elkhorn High. Jacha graduated from Elkhorn High this past spring and has handed off S.O.S. to new senior leadership, however, her love for volunteering will continue at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in the fall.

Jacha plans to major in public health, where she hopes to obtain the necessary tools to further pursue her long-term dreams.

“My goal in life is to someday go back home to Zimbabwe and start a center for people who have been abused, regardless of what gender they are,” Jacha said.

Her parents have been very encouraging.

“My parents have had a huge influence on my volunteer work, and they have been very supportive,” she said.

Starting the S.O.S. made Jacha realize her own potential.

“I know now that if I am stepping outside my comfort zone, it is a good thing, and I am growing as a person and improving myself. It also has shown me that I shouldn’t be afraid to put my dreams into action, and make my visions a reality,” Jacha said.

Jacha will continue to keep helping the world in any way she can.

“Even if I don’t become a rich person, or someone huge like Warren Buffett or something, I can still help my community,” Jacha said. “Any small thing is good enough, as long as you are doing something.”