

When I arrived at Mark Twain, I was in fifth grade, and had just moved to Westerville. I had enough anxiety to make Eeyore hyper. I wore giant sunglasses to hide the fact I had been sobbing less than 10 minutes ago in the counselor's office. I read a lot, so much that the teachers sometimes took my books away as a consequence. Mark Twain was overwhelming, but it was nice. The topics I learned were interesting, especially in social studies. The best field trip that year was Biztown. To prepare for that, in social studies, we learned how to write a check. It was fun. The library was my favorite place in the school and the playground was huge. The art class was so fun, I especially loved it when we drew birds. The teachers were so kind and the kids were indifferent, as kids are, but they were accepting. I made a lot of friends and started to learn how to be a person at Mark Twain, so it was a great experience.

I attended Mark Twain Elementary from kindergarten through fifth grade, and through that time I have learned a vast amount of lessons that have impacted not only my life as a student, but also my personal life as well. These lessons that I've learned have given me positive results in the classroom as well as within my community.

I give a lot of the credit to how I am as a person today to the teachers and staff at Mark Twain when I was there from 2012 to 2018. It was my first experience in an academic and social environment and was the perfect stepping stone to my success in middle school and high school. During my time at Mark Twain I developed lifelong friendships and recognized what my passions were. My long love for history was first discovered at Mark Twain. I fondly remember going to the Ohio Statehouse in fourth grade with Mrs. Lee's class and being so captivated with everything I was seeing, and thinking of the significance of it. Additionally, I have fond memories of Mr. Mantenieks fifth grade class when he was the sole social studies teacher. His teaching style of history always had me so engaged; he made every concept he taught so fascinating. I also recognized that I had a strong love for math and science. Through fun hands-on activities that utilized math and science concepts, it further led me to discover I had a love for building. I especially remember a group project in Mrs. Seabury's 5th grade math class that involved using volume and surface area to create a "block city." There were constraints that needed to be followed, but the bottom line was to use the numbers you found to be as creative as possible with how you constructed your city. Creative projects like that were one of my favorite aspects of being a student at Mark Twain. It also reinforced the idea that hard work pays off, as the more creative you are, the better grade you ultimately receive.

Everything that I had learned and developed at Mark Twain set me up for success in my future academic career. Coming out of elementary school and on to middle school, I was placed in all advanced classes, and from sixth to eighth grade had a 4.0 GPA for all 12 total quarters (this included the fourth quarter of my seventh grade year being all online, and my entire eighth grade year being either online, or heavily restricted in-person learning). I decided to enroll in all honors and AP classes going into my freshman year and managed to stay above a 4.6 GPA the whole year. This trend continued for the rest of high school. At our yearly academic awards night for Westerville North, I have received academic letters three years in a row and have been recognized for superior academic performance in most every class I've taken. I have also received awards for success in both the PSAT and SAT, as well as multiple AP Classes, and being admitted into the National Honors Society. I've managed to be in the top 5% of my class while playing two school sports and holding down a part time job. I give it all to Mark Twain for helping me develop this work ethic.

My time at Mark Twain had also led me to becoming more involved with student activities. I was involved with Service Club and Chess Club for most of my time at Mark Twain, as well as Safety Patrol in fifth grade. Service Club and Safety Patrol helped me recognize that I enjoyed helping people, and Chess Club helped me recognize the joy of having a sense of community around a commonality. In Middle School I continued to seek out these community activities, being involved in National Junior Honors Society and W.E.B., as well as Ski Club,

Golf, and Basketball. During this time I also became involved with community activities outside of school, volunteering with my family for Children's Hunger Alliance and the Ronald McDonald House during COVID, as well as being involved with Wyldlife, a youth christian organization. In high school I stayed involved with YoungLife (the high school version of Wyldlife), continued playing school sports (golf and baseball), performed service activities with National Honors Society, and picked up a part time job to prepare myself for my future. If Mark Twain hadn't offered those initial opportunities to serve others or be involved with people of similar interests, I most likely would not have had the interest to pursue them in middle school or high school.

## MARK TWAIN ESSAY BY Aleksander Tekle

I was In MARK TWAIN Elementary school from second to fourth grade and it was hands down the most influential school I've ever gone to. My friends and teachers helped shape who I am today. Ms. Lee, Ms. Glacier are just some of the names of the teachers that changed my life. They stayed after school with me and my friends because of our situations and they helped us all become the best students we could possibly be. I felt wanted and loved by the Teachers at this school and I appreciated it more than they could ever know. I was given the Success reward which was given to two students in the whole school. The criteria was simply the teachers chose who they believed would be successful in the future. I was ecstatic they really believed in me and I took it upon myself to make sure their belief in me will not be fruitless.

I have gone to many school's throughout my life. I've gone to two elementary schools and two highschools so I felt like I was always moving but Mark Twain was the school for me as a kid. I felt I was in the right place and after school I played soccer until the sun came down and repeated it over and over. That was my life and it was great. My relationship with the teachers played the biggest part of my success during my elementary years and I am forever grateful to them for helping me and going out of their way to do so.

In conclusion I believe I deserve the Mark TWain scholarships because of the impact it left on me that I'll hold for the rest of my life. This school is a big reason why I want to further my education in the engineering field. I only have God,family,friends,coaches and teachers to thank for everything.

### **The Power of Action**

My participation in sports, clubs like the Feminist Club, the Ohio State Student Leadership and Research Collaborative (SLRC), and involvement in local politics has significantly shaped my character, enriched my understanding of community service, and helped prepare me for leadership roles in the future. Each of these experiences has contributed to my personal growth, giving me valuable skills in communication, teamwork, advocacy, and problem-solving. As I reflect on these experiences, I recognize how they have not only allowed me to give back to the community but also provided me with the tools to become a more effective and empathetic leader.

First and foremost, my participation in sports has taught me essential lessons about perseverance, discipline, and teamwork. Sports have challenged me to push my physical and mental limits, teaching me the importance of setting goals and working relentlessly to achieve them. More than that, being part of a team has shown me how crucial it is to support others in their growth and success. In sports, leadership often comes in many forms - sometimes it's leading by example, other times it's offering words of encouragement or stepping up when needed most. These experiences have helped me understand the importance of collaboration, patience, and mutual respect, all of which are essential qualities for any leader. Moreover, sports have instilled in me the importance of resilience - learning to recover from setbacks and using those challenges as opportunities to grow.

In addition to sports, my involvement in the Feminist Club has played a pivotal role in shaping my character and fostering a deeper sense of social responsibility. The club has given me a platform to advocate for gender equality and women's rights, while also educating myself on the intersections of feminism with other social justice issues. Through organizing events, participating in discussions, and collaborating with other students, I've gained insight into how grassroots movements and community organizing can make a tangible impact. The Feminist Club has not only helped me refine my leadership skills through being president, but also reinforced the idea that effective leaders must be willing to stand up for what's right, even when it's difficult. This commitment to justice and equity has become a core value in my life and one that I carry with me as I look toward future leadership opportunities and my goal of becoming a human and civil rights lawyer.

Similarly, my involvement in the Ohio State Student Leadership and Research Collaborative (SLRC) has provided me with a deeper understanding of how leadership and research intersect. The SLRC has given me the opportunity to work with a diverse group of students and faculty members throughout all of Ohio on meaningful projects that address the issues at our schools. Through this experience, I have learned the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making. The research I've conducted as part of this collaborative has taught me how to approach problems systematically, ask the right questions, and contribute to solutions that can benefit the broader community. In SLRC, we have had to conduct quantitative and qualitative data collection and present our ideas to local decision makers and educational faculty. Additionally, the SLRC has reinforced the idea that leaders are not just those who have authority - they are also those who bring people together, foster innovation, and drive positive change. Dr. Keith Bell, the founder and leader of the initiative, continues to tell us that power and good ideas can come from kids, that if we organize to actually solve the problem we can get more done than we know.

Finally, my involvement in local politics has given me a firsthand look at the complexities of governance and civic engagement. Since I was little (3 or 4), I have been taken canvassing, I've made calls, and stuffed letters for citizens running for local offices. I have also been taken to local civil justice

protests for Black Lives Matter and for womens and lgbtqa+ rights. Standing in the hot sun and marching down the street hand in hand with people so different from me fighting for the same things, has shown me the value in everyone's voice and the power of the people. It has bonded me to my community in a special way. I recently was a poll worker during the 2025 presidential election. The 15 hour day allowed me to work with people who have been poll workers for years and to help every citizen that came in to vote complete their civic duty without judgment. By volunteering for campaigns, participating in town hall meetings, and engaging in advocacy work, I've learned the importance of listening to others, building coalitions, and creating inclusive solutions that address the needs of diverse communities. Local politics and advocacy work has instilled in me a deep sense of civic responsibility and the understanding that leadership is not just about making decisions - it's about fighting alongside your community and recognizing that local decisions do make an impact on a lot of people. So use your voice, it's powerful.

All of these experiences were a result of where I began, at Mark Twain. I remember Mrs. Seabury the most. She was kind, patient, and caring when she taught me. She looked out for me and believed in what I could do, always encouraging me to get involved in activities and specifically service club at Mark Twain. I also remember the fear of middle school. I was so afraid to go be a big kid, but Mrs. Seabury words of affirmation gave me confidence for my life in middle school. She was so sure that I would be fine that it squashed some of my fear and gave me self-confidence. Together, these experiences have shaped my character and equipped me with the skills necessary to be an effective leader. They have taught me the value of collaboration, the importance of listening, and the need to approach challenges with empathy and determination. As I continue to develop these skills, I feel increasingly prepared to take on leadership roles that will allow me to give back to my community, advocate for positive change, and inspire others to do the same. The lessons I've learned through sports, clubs, academic collaborations, and political involvement have not only shaped who I am today but have also laid the groundwork for the leader and human and civil rights lawyer I aspire to become.

# Mark Twain PTA Scholarship

By:Ghenet Hailemichael

Coming from a different country as an immigrant and being put into the ESL program at Mark Twain wasn't easy. On top of the typical school subjects—Math, English, Science, and Social studies—I had to work extra hard to learn the language and catch up. This was stressful on my end, especially because my family didn't have access to technology or resources. Despite these challenges, Mark Twain became a place where I felt safe, supported, and encouraged.

What made Mark Twain stand out for me were the teachers who went above and beyond to ensure we had the help we needed. At the time, I lived in an apartment complex called Abbey Lane, it's known for cheap housing & it's home to a diverse community from all over the world, many new immigrants typically make this their first home when they come to The United States. A memorable moment that I will never forget is the afterschool program that Mark Twain teachers started for us students living in Abbey Lane, it provided us extra help from our teachers with homework and classwork. The teachers understood that not all of us had the technology or reliable help at home, so they created a fun, engaging space where they could help us get our work done. The afterschool program wasn't just about homework; it was an experience that made us feel valued. We played educational games, and they even provided us with a meal. At the end of the day, many of us didn't have reliable transportation to get home, so the teachers arranged free transportation for us to get home.

These gestures, which were done entirely out of the teachers own goodwill. I felt like the staff truly cared about our success, not just academically but emotionally and socially as well. Mark Twain became a place I could never forget, and it set the tone for how I would approach

# Mark Twain PTA Scholarship

By:Ghenet Hailemichael

challenges in my life. It was there that I began to believe in myself in ways I never thought was possible.

What makes my experience at Mark Twain even more unique is how the support from my teachers didn't end when I graduated from elementary school. Even after I left Mark Twain and moved on to middle school, my teachers continued to check in on me and email me often. They weren't just teachers—they became mentors and role models. They made sure I was doing well, staying out of trouble, and adjusting to the new challenges of middle school. Their continued involvement in my life showed me that their care went beyond the classroom, and they genuinely wanted to see me succeed.

The support I received from Mark Twain extended far beyond the classroom and even continued during the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic hit, it created more challenges for students and families, especially those like mine who were already facing financial and language barriers. Despite these difficulties, my teachers remained devoted in their commitment to helping us. During the lockdown, Mark Twain's teachers delivered school supplies, food, and even fun activities to make sure we felt connected to school and to each other. I'll never forget the big parties they hosted in our neighborhood in the summer, where families could come together, enjoy music, food, and games, and simply have fun. The teachers and staff didn't have to do any of this—it wasn't part of their regular responsibilities—but they did it anyway, out of their own love and dedication to their students.



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By:Ghenet Hailemichael

Throughout my high school years, I have put in a lot of effort to improve the skills that Mark Twain nurtured in me. I find myself becoming more confident, outgoing and outspoken. I have learned to stand up for what I think is right. The compassion I gained at Mark Twain has motivated me to get involved in community service projects. One of the most rewarding experiences has been mentoring elementary school teachers at another school. Through this experience, I have realized how important it is to help others and give back the kindness that was shown to me.

Along the way, my community service has not stopped at mentoring teachers. In high school One of the key ways I've made a difference is through leadership in a variety of student organizations. As president of the International Culture Club, I was responsible for organizing cultural events where members were giving our school a taste of their cultural food and history, fostering inclusivity, and promoting diversity within our school. This role allowed me to engage more with international kids just like me from all over the world. In addition to my role in the International Culture Club, I have been an active member of the Black Student Union throughout all four years of high school. Working in this club has created so many wonderful opportunities: discussions based on cultural identity and social justice, and global issues. I've also contributed to the Black History Month Show, where I actively participated each year by dancing, singing, acting, cultural fashion show to name a few, and had assisted greatly toward displaying that sense of pride and unity felt not just in Black History Month but amongst a community within. As a Link Crew leader, I was able to mentor younger students taking them under my wing and help them through the transition into high school. This role told me that a supportive environment can

# Mark Twain PTA Scholarship

By:Ghenet Hailemichael

have a big impact on a young person's success. I was also president of the Alpha Bible Club, contributing to building a community of faith and leadership, organizing study sessions and events to promote spiritual growth among my peers.

I have done projects that benefit not only my school but also the local community. I've volunteered at the school event, made Christmas bags for the homeless people in my community and taken part in tutoring programs for younger students. Each of these, however, has helped me grow, forever shaping my view of giving back and helped me develop a broader sense of empathy and responsibility.

Although my academic journey had its ups and downs, I have made significant strides in my education. My grades improved dramatically after I was accepted into the Cosmetology program at Columbus Downtown High School my junior year of high school. This experience, where I split my day between career tech courses there and academic studies at South, reignited my passion for learning. I learned a lot of valuable career skills, but I also learned that I am capable of doing well academically. This realization led me to earn multiple honor roll recognitions and gave me confidence in my academic capabilities. My growth as a student culminated in being nominated by my principal for the "Cats with Class" award, given to students who have shown resilience, hard work, and character throughout the school year.

These experiences have reinforced the lessons I learned at Mark Twain: that education isn't just about grades or academic success, but about fostering a sense of belonging, compassion, and community. I am proud to have contributed to my community and school, and I know that these contributions have made a lasting impact.

# Mark Twain PTA Scholarship

By:Ghenet Hailemichael

Reflecting on my journey, It is clear, looking back over this period, that it was the Mark Twain Elementary School that sparked the interest in me for teaching and community service. I want to create an environment where students feel the same warmth and support I experienced. This school taught me to believe in myself, and as this high school journey comes to an end, I will carry this with me as I continue my education and pour in that same kind of love into other people!

I attended Mark Twain from 2012-2017, and participated in many activities including running club, cub scouts, breakfast readings, and I volunteered as a 5th grade kindergarten helper. My experience at Mark Twain as a whole was very special as I had amazing teachers and friends who made learning more enjoyable. I also learned things that I enjoy and things that I'm good at that I continued to do beyond elementary school. For example, it was the running club where I realized that I was pretty good at distance running, which ended up leading me to being on Westerville North's varsity cross country team all four years. I also discovered that I like helping others even though sometimes I'm a little shy. Being a 5th grade kindergarten helper was a ton of fun and I remember feeling like a big kid, which obviously doesn't seem like that anymore now that I've volunteered through other organizations such as Ohio Energy Project. I've helped many 4th graders build wind turbines at many different elementary schools including Mark Twain, which especially was fun for me to see old teachers and just remember what elementary school was like compared to high school. Along with that, I helped with ICan at Hawthorne Elementary, where I helped 2nd graders learn good habits and qualities like having confidence in themselves to do anything.

Even though Mark Twain doesn't have any sports teams, I found myself learning how to be on a team, especially basketball which I played almost every recess. There were some kids that were being kind of selfish and a little mean, but it showed me that there will always be those people in life and that all we can do is be kind to them and show them what it looks like to be nice. I'd say most of the time though we had a great time playing game after game of basketball and I remember lots of us asking our teacher if we could have extra recess, which was the best thing ever at the time. And now having been on a high school team in many different sports, I've realized the importance of having a positive team culture that started in elementary school.

All my life, I've been wanting to set a good example for others to follow, and even though I definitely wasn't perfect in elementary school or now in high school, I still try to do my best. I give lots of credit to my parents, but also the amazing teachers at Mark Twain that set a good example for me by supporting me and always being positive. It was also at Mark Twain where I knew for sure I loved math, which still carries on today proving that all the little steps of growth during those five years have helped build me into the person I am today.

When I was in Kindergarden or maybe even first grade, I was flagged for having a chance of not passing the mandated third grade Ohio State Test in third grade. Because of this, I was put into a reading tutoring class in first grade where I worked with Ms. Calhoun throughout the year and really enjoyed my time with her, how she taught us, and simply learning in general. She was my favorite teacher and I would always look forward to my time with her even though it outcast me from my class in a way. One day when I got home from school, my mom told me I had graduated from “reading” and my tutoring was ending at the end of the week. I was so distraught that I wouldn't see Ms. Calhoun anymore, so she gave me a graduation gift of small post-it-notes with a “M” on them so that I could write little notes every so often and put them in her mailbox even if it was just to say “Hi.” With her help I quickly accelerated through different reading levels and was even labeled as “gifted” after the third grade testing.

Now, I am at the top of my classes at Westerville South and I challenge myself by taking several AP classes across all subjects and even IB Spanish. I have a passion for learning, and reading, which I know is because of the foundation I built at Mark Twain with Ms. Calhoun. Because of my time with Ms. Calhoun, I felt the need to give back to the community and now volunteer with the I-Can program, which was made possible by my membership in the National Honor Society, at Minerva France every Wednesday teaching second graders core values and how to build good character. I'm proud to know that with my help, along with the Rotary Club member and another highschooler I volunteer with, they will grow up to be good upstanding citizens no matter where they end up, be it our community, or another, or what they end up doing.

I would describe my experience at Mark Twain as being amazing. I was a fresh immigrant and they treated me with kindness and a warm welcome, I will forever remember that. I enjoyed my classes and being with my peers at Mark Twain, even though I had difficulty understanding what was happening most of the time. I was taught to treat everyone the way I wanted to be treated and this has stuck with me. By the end of my elementary school years, I became a kindergarten helper, I went to the kindergarten classes, helped out the teachers, and played with the kids. I enjoyed the role I played in those kids' lives, it was an amazing experience. I have always strived for good grades and have maintained that throughout high school. I have positively impacted my school by joining clubs and leadership positions to be someone they can look up to or approach about anything. I also try my best to have a welcoming tone and an approachable demeanor for them to feel this way. I am always promoting kindness and inclusion since that was what I wanted once I first went to Mark Twain Elementary School. My experiences and learning at Mark Twain have been highly impactful. Being an immigrant who barely knew English was scary, but attending Mark Twain eased those emotions. I can't even put into words the amount of gratitude I have for this school, just by the way I was treated. My experience has taught me to never judge a book by its cover and to always welcome everybody in. I favored the staff at Mark Twain as well as my peers. I appreciate everyone and the positive impression they left on me. My favorite memories were in my third-grade class when my classmates were quick to include me even through our language barrier.

## The Mark Twain Legacy: Shaping My Journey of Growth and Service

My time at Mark Twain Elementary was more than a chapter in my academic journey; it was the foundation of my character, aspirations, and commitment to giving back. Attending Mark Twain for two pivotal years introduced me to a nurturing environment where I was encouraged to dream big, embrace challenges, and appreciate the value of community. These lessons have shaped my path and continue to guide me as I navigate high school and prepare for the next phase of my life.

### Personal Achievements

One of my most fulfilling accomplishments in high school has been tutoring younger students in math. This experience allowed me to combine my academic skills with my passion for helping others. I also took on leadership roles in my school's environmental club, where I organized recycling drives and tree-planting events. These activities not only sharpened my leadership skills but also deepened my understanding of the impact of small actions on the larger community. Additionally, I balanced academics and extracurriculars by maintaining a strong GPA while excelling as a member of the varsity debate team, where I won several regional awards.

### Community Engagement

Mark Twain instilled in me the importance of serving others, a value I carried forward into high school. One of my proudest contributions has been volunteering at the local food pantry, where I spent weekends organizing donations and preparing meal kits for families in need. I also participated in a mentorship program, guiding middle school students through their academic and personal challenges. These experiences have taught me that true fulfillment comes from helping others and creating opportunities for them to succeed.

### The Impact of Mark Twain Elementary

The supportive teachers and programs at Mark Twain laid the foundation for my growth. I vividly remember my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Johnson, who encouraged me to believe in my abilities and approach challenges with confidence. Her words of encouragement gave me the courage to join the school's science fair, where I placed second for a project on renewable energy. Beyond academics, Mark Twain's emphasis on teamwork and kindness shaped my outlook on collaboration and the importance of fostering meaningful relationships.

The lessons I learned at Mark Twain are woven into every aspect of my life. The school gave me a safe space to explore my potential and develop the resilience needed to overcome obstacles. It also taught me the importance of paying it forward—a principle I have embraced through my community service and leadership roles.

As I look toward the future, I am deeply grateful for the foundation Mark Twain Elementary provided. Its influence continues to guide me as I strive to make a positive impact on the world.



around me. I am excited to honor the legacy of Mark Twain by continuing to grow, contribute, and inspire others, just as the school has inspired me.

Parents, mentors, teachers, and coaches are all adults who can have a large impact on a person's life. Coaches can be the glue for a team, building programs, work ethic, and friendships within a team. But losing one has the potential to break that team.

I am a part of my Westerville North High School's Color Guard team, and it has benefited me greatly throughout high school. We had the same head coach for my first three seasons, and he helped the team greatly as a group and as individuals. He taught me personally a lot of what I know about the sport. Before a practice during my junior season, one of the assistant coaches informed us that our head coach was involved in a serious personal situation and would likely not return for a while. I was anxious knowing that this key part of our team would be missing. As the season progressed, we realized he would not be returning at all. This came as a shock and disappointment to the team because he had been running the program for a long time. The void caused constant uncertainty and I really missed him being there to teach and support us. He had known me throughout high school and helped me through many of my experiences with it. Losing him was so difficult to navigate as an individual and a team.

I was in a position of leadership on the team and knew I needed to continue to bring energy and encouragement to every practice. My emotions didn't match my words of excitement, but I knew my team was all feeling down and struggling like I was. Working together helped the experience to become easier to process and get through. I made sure to connect with each member individually and provide encouraging words. I also helped conduct some small games and exercises during practice to bring up team spirit. I learned that helping others through this time helped me as well. The ultimate victory came at our final competition when we won first place. It was so rewarding to see how my connections with others, and confidence in myself could grow throughout this tough time. This was an amazing way to end an extremely difficult season.

My efforts to bring a positive light to the team, and to encourage them throughout a tough time, were acknowledged when I was chosen to be given the Positivity Award at our

band's end-of-season awards. I was selected from the whole 110-person marching band, and I was honored to accept it. My goal throughout the season, especially through the difficulties, was to be a provider of positivity, encouragement, and help.

I truly believe my junior season, although filled with stress, is one that was a blessing. Although it proved to only be a minor setback, it felt much bigger at the time. I am now closer than ever to my teammates and know how to work through hard times with a positive outlook, giving an opportunity for an amazing ending.

Overall, Color Guard has brought me wonderful experiences and unforgettable memories. I will always be thankful to my coaches, team, and God for the difficulties and the growth from that season. I am looking forward to carrying these lessons that this season taught me throughout whatever life may bring my way.

Rachel Harvey

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Education WESTERVILLE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL (2021-2025) Westerville, OH

GPA: Weighted: 4.4750 Unweighted: 3.945

SAT: 1290

Service

Hours

## SCIOTO HILLS CHRISTIAN CAMP Summer 2023 & 2024

### Teen Volunteer

Supervise children, lead activities, set up activities, service projects on the campgrounds. One Week, 75-80 service hours.

## LINWORTH BAPTIST CHURCH VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL Summers 2018-2024

### High School Volunteer

Supervise children, assist in activities, assist in set up and tear down, lead them in music. One Week, 20-25 service hours.

## LINWORTH BAPTIST CHURCH CHILD CARE/ NURSERY 2021-2024

### VOLUNTEER

Supervise children, entertain children. Twice a month, 12-15 service hours a year.

## Atlanta Missions Trip Summer 2023

### VOLUNTEER

Serve a group by supervising their children, lead children in activities, pack meals, distribute packed meals. One week, 20 service hours.

## Awards/

### Honors

## SUPERIOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Award received freshman, sophomore, and junior year.

## PSAT ALL-STAR AWARD

Award received junior year.

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ARTS

Award received freshman, sophomore, and junior year.

## SCHOLAR PERFORMER

Award received sophomore and junior year.

#### NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

Award received junior year.

#### POSITIVITY AWARD

Westerville North Marching Band award, received junior year.

#### MOST IMPROVED AWARD

Westerville North Marching Band award, received freshman year.

#### LEADERSHIP AWARD

Westerville North Winterguard award, received junior year.

#### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN WORLD LANGUAGE

Award received freshman year.

#### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS

Award received sophomore year.

#### OUTSTANDING LANGUAGE STUDENT

Award received freshman year.

#### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH

Award received freshman year.

#### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Award received sophomore and junior year.

#### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE

Award received sophomore and junior year.

Walking through the halls of WNHS and asking any random person if they knew of me would yield a fairly dismal result. You see, I don't ooze charisma or give bold speeches. I prefer to blend into any crowd, and I certainly don't take dramatic actions. These are the skills that are often associated with a leader. There is a powerful form of leadership, though, that operates quietly and subtly, but is no less impactful. The type of leadership that operates using an approach that emphasizes influence through integrity, empathy, and the ability to inspire others through actions rather than words. How did I become a quiet leader, you might be wondering? Look no further than the walls of Mark Twain elementary where I had the perfect blend of quiet leaders, those teachers that are often behind the scenes, leading and not wanting recognition, leading through the positive impact they have on their students.

A quiet leader understands their strengths and weaknesses and remains grounded. They do not seek the spotlight but focus on building trust and fostering relationships. By listening attentively, empathizing with others, and providing thoughtful guidance, quiet leaders create a supportive environment where individuals feel valued and motivated. I have extensive practice in doing this through my various volunteer efforts. The most impactful of these, I feel, is the work I do as a difference maker at a WCS elementary school kindergarten classroom. One of the highlights of volunteering at the school is the opportunity to engage with students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Every kindergarten student I interact with has a similar academic need. Helping them gain confidence while we work on this academic obstacle has shifted my perspective on what it means to offer help. It's not always about providing immediate solutions, but rather offering structure, a smile, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. This has helped me understand the value of not just giving an answer or fixing, but rather, helping my kindergarten friends persevere. This quiet leadership is impactful to those I work with directly, but I see it as an opportunity to pay it back. You see, I was one of those kindergarten students who struggled a bit. I received a lot of guidance, support, and smiles from the Mark Twain kindergarten team, as well as volunteers. The work that those teachers did was absolutely the foundation for all of my academic success today.

One of the core principles of quiet leadership is leading by example. Rather than dictating orders, quiet leaders demonstrate the behavior they wish to see in others. My behavior as a hostess at an Uptown Westerville establishment is a model for other hostesses and customers. I am a difference maker by showing resilience in the face of adversity, like an over-booked reservation list, acting with integrity in difficult situations, such as offering solutions to an unsatisfied customer, or being consistent in my work ethic, I am a lead hostess through these actions. These actions speak louder than words, by helping to foster a positive, productive workplace and customer experience. While I may be referencing a paid job in this instance, it is, nonetheless, a contribution to the community as I see many neighborhood patrons and it serves as yet another way that I am connected to the Mark Twain community, as I often see many of you visit the establishment where I work).

Another way that I have been a difference maker was in such a way that actually began as a selfish pursuit, but has led to endless opportunities to lead others to advocate for themselves. This aspect of quiet leadership is advocacy and resilience. Being forced to deal with physical pain caused me to withdraw from my peers, withdraw from activities that I once enjoyed, and made me question how I viewed myself. I began to question my worth, and frankly, I was in such physical pain that I was miserable. Rather than allowing these challenges to define me, I channeled my energy into seeking solutions that would yield a desirable outcome for me. I learned to be resilient in playing the waiting game with doctors, to push through when things felt physically and mentally difficult, and to embrace the support I learned surrounded me from family, friends, teachers, and doctors. This experience taught me the value of persistence. Finally, as a sophomore, I received a bi-lateral reduction mammoplasty. This surgery was the beginning of a pain free life, the rebuilding of peer relationships, and the self validation I had been seeking. As a result, I have been called upon and sought out to share my story with other young women who are experiencing similar pain and obstacles. Opportunities have arisen for me to lead and empower others to advocate for themselves. I am proud to say that I have been a direct difference maker for two of my fellow peers.

In conclusion, making a difference through quiet leadership is about subtle influence, trust-building, leading by example, and empowering others. While it may not be as visibly dramatic as most leadership styles, its effects are just as powerful and long-lasting. In a world that often celebrates loud and overt leadership, the quiet leader's impact is both transformative and lasting. The foundation for my leadership style was cultivated and shaped while I was a student at Mark Twain Elementary. My experiences with top-notch teachers and experiences have led me to be a strong student, strong advocate, and strong leader, albeit a quiet one.

“This will be our last house. I promise.”

Just after my sixth birthday, my family settled into our sixth house that we had lived in since I was born. We were a military family, with my Dad having served several years, both domestically and abroad, and moving countless times. By the time I was six, I had already seen and experienced more of the world than I could have even comprehended.

However, while moving frequently meant being able to see more of the world from a young age, it also meant moving on from any established environment quickly, unable to truly put down roots anywhere. Previously, I had seen many strangers, met many neighbors, and known many friends. But, after a year or so, all of that would disappear and I'd start again, meeting neighbors and new friends. That all changed when I came to Mark Twain.

We moved into our house three days before Kindergarten started, and I was able to fall into a new start. Through my experience at Mark Twain, I've met people and made friends that have stuck with me through the years. Such as my friend from first grade.

In first grade I met my first long-term friend. At first we bonded over small similarities, we both had brown hair and brown eyes, we laughed over the same dumb jokes, and we both liked to play four-square. However, over time, my friend started to struggle throughout the day as she faced different issues back at home. Although I didn't fully understand her experience or what was happening at the time, I tried my best to stay by her and help her through the day, no matter what that meant. I would sit with her when she sat alone at lunch, I'd follow her around on the playground, and would try to make her laugh as much as I could. While I could never fix the issues at hand, I could help in that moment, and from that help, solidified our friendship.

Experiences like these helped to shape a deeper desire to understand and support mentally those around me. For a while, I explored this avenue through the study of psychology, with an emphasis on the clinical side of it. However, when I got to High School, I found myself in a government class and for the first time in a long time, I was truly engaged with the class. This engagement was not unfounded however, as I had previously taken great joy from my fundamental history and social studies classes from Mark Twain. Teachers like Mr. Mantenikes taught in such an engaging way that I still remember his classes vividly. I remember sitting in the large square of desks, with the window letting in early morning light, yet the class would still laugh as if we hadn't just woken up an hour beforehand.

Whether my interest was due to my peers, my past, or to the class itself, my teacher encouraged me to go pursue my interest in people and their institutions.

From this motivation, I began the Students for Good Government club and ran several Voter Registration drives for my community and to encourage civic engagement from my peers. Later, my teacher encouraged me to attend the annual Buckeye Girls State - a program run by the American Legion Auxiliary that allows several hundred girls from throughout the state to gather and run a mock-government for a week. While it was a great experience, I was able to meet and form long friendships, despite only knowing people for a week.

I was the only girl from my school to go to this program. I packed my bags and walked into - and possibly one of the most intense - times of my life, while knowing no one in the process.

Truly, I don't believe I would have been able to do this if I hadn't earlier received the support from my teachers at Mark Twain. While I was there, I was able to receive support and



encouragement from them. But, even later in life, I was able to find solace in Mark Twain and their staff when I was considering going to Stanford's Summer School for High Schoolers. I was offered the opportunity in my Junior year and while it sounded like a great opportunity, it involved leaving home for the first time in my life. I was stressed and doubtful about what to do and what I could handle at that time. So, I turned to my fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Hynes.

She talked to me about the pros and cons of what this would mean for myself and my future. Ultimately, she encouraged me to pursue this opportunity and to take this chance. So, I applied. While I didn't end up attending the Summer School, Mrs. Hynes' willingness and kindness to meet with me and to catch up meant the world to me and was the basis for my future courage in my endeavors.

As I reflect on my life, Mark Twain stands more as a home in my memory. A place where I was able to learn and grow with my peers and to truly explore the fundamentals of what friendship and community meant. From here, I was able to explore future paths in High School to serve my local community and my peers through involvement with getting myself and others engaged with government and the role we all play in it. I hope to continue this journey as I pursue a degree of International Relations in college. College, while it will be a large adjustment in my life, will be something I know I can handle and actively look forward to - all because of the impact my teachers, friends, and experiences have given me in my life.

## The Good Old Times

My time at Mark Twain is always something that I will keep close to my heart. There was never a moment that I felt excluded. One's early time in life has such a great impact on how they are now.

Many of my closest friends are from our elementary school. In third grade, I was at recess and the air had a chill to it, as the change of seasons turned the leaves wonderful oranges and reds. I was under a patch of conifers and playing house with some friends. One of my acquaintances thought to introduce me to Alix, one of the new people. We instantly became best of friends. Even after losing touch in middle school, we have rekindled our friendship in the last few years. We reminisced about one of our favorite parts of Mark Twain - the holiday parties - at Westerville North's Environmental club when we were making crafts out of reused waste.

Another aspect of Mark Twain that I appreciate is their support of my interest in the environment. I was introduced for the first time to various methods of power generation and the problems with burning fossil fuels. Now the spark makes me research and understand the impact of everything that the human world does. It has led me to the conclusion that alternative ways of living are necessary so that we can survive, that our current system of the need for constant growth isn't conducive to living with nature. As a small part of changing the world like I want to see it, I now darn my socks and some of my friend's to reduce the need to purchase new things when what we already have can be made new. My AP environmental teacher, Mrs. Morkel and I had long conversations after environmental club meetings to talk about the environment and she convinced me to start growing some food like tomatoes and beans. All of this joy that I have in organizing around environmental issues wouldn't have been possible without the encouragement that I received from Mark Twain teachers.

I also recall my time with the music teacher, Mr. Murphy. He first introduced our class to a youtube channel called Vihart to show us visually how counterpoint works. I have been keeping up with all that Viheart has to offer such as their video on twelve tones rows which was my first introduction to music that didn't follow the traditional guidelines that the common practice follows. That really helped

me to expand what types of music I listen to and pay attention even if at first it isn't intuitive. That seed that he planted in a very real way encourages me to write music, including a short musical.

Being active is also a seed that Mark Twain nurtured in me through the walking club. The normalization of being active because it is fun makes me go on walks now. I find that exercising in this way is very rewarding. When I am anxious, I go out walking, often to the very loop that we walked in that club.

Thanks to those teachers, I can't wait to go to college, study more about biochemistry to make our food systems more efficient and get more acquainted with music so I can express my creativity.

## Mark Twain PSA Scholarship

Throughout my high school career, I have maintained straight A's for all of my classes. I have taken the most rigorous and difficult classes offered at Westerville South. I have taken multiple AP classes and gotten scores of 5 on the Calculus AB, Physics 1, psychology, and U.S. government. Other AP tests that I have taken are AP language and AP world history where I got scores of 4. I have earned a few honors including the AP Scholar with Distinction award and the College Board National First-Generation Recognition Program. I have also found a job as a pickup clerk at Kroger and have found success there as I am a reliable and efficient employee there. During the spring, I was inducted into the National Honor Society program and now volunteer and help with a variety of events. Recently in the fall, I was able to volunteer and help out with the Mark Twain 50th Anniversary event. I helped run one of the blow up stations and it was nice to see some of my old teachers there. I have helped with blood drives in the past and I am currently helping with getting people to donate blood. In 7th grade, I volunteered to help with the Ohio Energy Project at Mark Twain. I came back to teach the fifth graders about different science topics and I remember when I was in fifth grade and experienced the same thing with older kids. Also a part of my job at Kroger is to provide a satisfactory and welcoming experience for customers. I have done my best to give my customers the best service and make sure that they are satisfied by making any possible requests happen. At Mark Twain Elementary, I was a part of two programs. First, I was a part of the ESL program. The teachers in the program were very nice and made learning enjoyable for me. I am always grateful for the experiences that they provided for me as a child and their help with my learning. The second program that I was a part of was the gifted program. I remember leaving class once a week and meeting with other classmates that were a part of the program. I enjoyed playing games and doing puzzles during

this time. The gifted program is what got me to take advanced classes in middle school and later on higher level classes in high school. I believe that the program showed me my potential in school and allowed me to realize that. I also remember the front office staff. They were very kind to everyone and made the school a fun place to be at. Lastly, a teacher at Mark Twain Elementary that has had a very strong and long lasting impact on my life is Mrs. Seabury. I am very grateful for Mrs. Seabury as she was an amazing teacher and was the one to really enhance my interest and liking for math. She made class fun for everyone and was kind to everyone. She made me love coming to school everyday and she would sometimes have lunch with me and my friends. Mrs. Seabury made me feel special and I am truly grateful for everything she did for me when I was in her class. I hope to be like her in the future and be able to provide the same experience for younger generations ahead. Mrs. Seabury has given me my love for math and that is a part of the reason why I want to become an engineer and help the world.

## **Mark Twain PTA Scholarship**

I am an IB Diploma Candidate and the Valedictorian for the Class of 2025 at Westerville South High School. As an underclassman, I undertook multiple honors and AP courses, and was able to receive the AP Scholar with Distinction Award by the end of my sophomore year. With my score of 1540 on the SAT in junior year, I was also able to receive a National First-Generation Recognition Program Award from CollegeBoard this year. The reason I was able to accomplish all that I mentioned above and develop other aspirations was due to my experiences at Mark Twain.

One of my earliest memories of Mark Twain was sitting in art class and admiring the skills of my Kindergarten Art teacher. The following years of art class with Mr. Kowalski were the beginnings of my love for art and I have consistently taken visual art classes since. I am proud of developing the skills that were capable of receiving the PTO Departmental Excellence Award in Art for two straight years. The artistry and creative spark that was ignited in Mark Twain will remain strong in the Studio Art courses that I will take in university.

Another experience from Mark Twain that impacted me heavily were my ESL classes with Ms. Kaforee. My memories from that time period were a driving factor behind my project as a Global Scholar Diploma Candidate. I remember struggling to learn how to be a successful student as an ESL student which has pushed me to collaborate with the district's Office of English Learners to enhance the academic direction given to ESL students. Specifically, I am creating a program for high school ESL students who are unfamiliar with the American education system: explaining GPAs, what classes to take, and how to prepare for college. My ultimate goal is to address the global issue of equal access to quality education, and I aimed to eliminate barriers for non-native English speakers to grant them equal opportunity to achieve their goals.

My time as an ESL student and my identity as a first-generation Chinese immigrant also fed into a general objective to service the community to the best of my abilities. Throughout all four years of high school, I have participated in organizations like Key Club, National Honor Society, and Student Council. There are many fond memories from the volunteer work that I have done from all the smiling faces of children of the Westerville Early Learning Center as they walked into the Winter Party that I poured my heart into decorating to cheering for runners completing the Columbus Marathon for the first time at a water station. I also took the opportunity to participate in an internship at the Franklin County Auditor's Office where I worked closely with struggling constituents who filed complaints about property values and invested hours into walking them through the mediation system and the available resources so that they felt comfortable as they progressed through the overall legal process.

I have often heard the saying "We are a mosaic of everyone we have loved." Looking back at my time in Mark Twain, there are multiple teachers and classes that make up who I am today. Mrs. Martin started my love for reading by introducing me to "A to Z Mysteries"; Mrs. McCoy convinced me to attend Leadership Summit and I now hold multiple leadership positions that I personally applied for; Mrs. Seabury started my love for math by teaching me more advanced math topics and emphasizing the ability to manipulate numbers—leading to me taking

six advanced math courses in the span of four years. My time at Mark Twain has fueled a lifelong curiosity that makes me excited to learn and pushes me to take on any challenge that comes my way in order to be the best version of myself I can be. I cannot imagine being the person I am today had I not attended Mark Twain Elementary School.