

Dana Hills student urges teens to think of others before themselves

By [DEBBIE L. SKLAR](#)

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Dana Hills High School senior Kelsey Gallitto hopes to become a sports-medicine therapist or a nutritionist. But in the meantime and between studies, she is active in many charities and enjoys volunteering as much as she can. She believes giving back is something everyone can do, including teenagers.



Q. When did you become interested in volunteering?

A. Volunteering and helping out my community has always been one of my passions in life. I was a Girl Scout for six years and then, in the seventh grade, I joined National Charity League and loved volunteering for my community. Being in Girl Scouts, NCL, the youth group at Coast Hills Community Church and the Health and Medical Occupations Academy at school has given me several opportunities to help out with my community.

Q. How so?

A. Most of my volunteering is done through NCL. I volunteer with organizations such as the Dana Point Library (reading to kids during the summer), Special Olympics (cheering kids on during athletic games), Race for the Cure, Meals on Wheels (delivering meals to people in Dana Point and San Juan Capistrano), Pumpkins and Pancakes (working with children during Halloween time), McKinney Theatre (ushering during plays and musicals), and dinners for the elderly at the Dana Point Community Center.

Through the Health and Medical Occupations Academy, I was able to work at my physical therapist's office, which gave me a golden opportunity to observe a career in which I may be interested in. I also volunteered countless hours at South Coast Medical Center (now Mission Hospital Laguna Beach) last year and various departments.

Q. What are some of your favorite things you have done for the community?

A. Working at South Coast Medical Center. I was able to work in the Sub Acute Unit, which is where patients are on ventilators and have no response, cannot talk, eat or do anything. These people live in their hospital bed and have few family members come to visit them. As I worked in this unit, I loved going in each day and reading to the patients. It was probably the most difficult thing I have ever had to do, but once I became comfortable, confident and opened up, it became something I loved doing. Even though I never quite knew what the patients were thinking, I occasionally was able to put a smile on a few of their faces each day, which made me so happy. When South Coast Medical Center was taken over by St. Joseph last spring, the Sub Acute Unit closed down and all the patients were transferred. This was a strong disappointment to me.

Q. Why do you think volunteering is important?

A. There is always someone in your community who is less fortunate than you and who is calling out for help. I believe that God has put us here for a reason, and it is so we can make a difference in others' lives.

Q. How has what you are doing benefited or enhanced your life?

A. What I do has made me a stronger and more confident person. It makes me happy to know that I can be myself while making another person's day. I love knowing that there is always someone who will appreciate what you do, even if it is the smallest thing, such as sitting down and having a simple conversation about how their day is going. Volunteering has also taught me to look after others before myself.

Q. What is the best part of what you do?

A. Realizing that I made a difference in someone else's day. Not only does it make them happy, but it makes me happy, too. I feel that everyone should go out and do something for others, because it truly makes a difference in everyone's life.

Q. How about the most challenging?

A. The most challenging part is being enthusiastic and opening up to others. I am very shy when first meeting people, so when I volunteer with new people, it's a challenge for me to be the first person to talk, but I am able to push through. Public speaking has never been my forte, so when it comes to choosing to speak in front of a large group, I never volunteer myself to do that. It's something I have been working on over the years.

Q. Any words of advice?

A. Go for it – your life will only be benefited and enriched. It will open your eyes to a whole new world. For kids and teens, this is all I have to say: Living in Orange County, I acknowledge that I am spoiled, and I believe that every kid living in California is spoiled. We live in a beautiful area that has so much to offer and we have so much going for us as long as we strive and put our minds to it.

We must realize that there are so many people out there who are less fortunate than we are, and we must be thankful for what we have. As cliché as that sounds, it's true. So, next time you complain to your parents about the iPhone you don't have, the expensive jeans you saw in the store window or the computer that you want, remember that complaining and begging is no way to get what you want. Think about others before yourself.

ABOUT KELSEY GALLITTO

Age: 17

Heroes: grandparents

Family: parents; younger sister, Jenna, a sophomore at Dana Hills; dog named Spencer adopted from the San Clemente/Dana Point Animal Shelter

Favorite quote: "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." – *Proverbs 16:3*

Hobbies/spare time: Running; swimming; lifeguarding for U.S. Ocean Safety; hanging out with friends and family; going to the movies, the beach and out to dinner; walking around Balboa Island and the Irvine Spectrum Center; snowboarding; recently learned how to wakeboard

College dream: to attend Point Loma University

Goals: to skydive and travel more

Motto: "Don't think less of yourself ... think of yourself less."

