Samuel Hines: Fundraising phenom

BY HARDY EVILLE

M VRHS sophomore Samuel Hines, who recently moved to the Island, was named a 2022 Student of the Year by the Greater Los Angeles Leukemia and Lymphoma Society for his fundraising efforts as leader of Team Unstoppable, and has moved on to the national Student of the Year competition. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS) Students of the Year Competition brings together teams of students from around the nation to compete by fundraising the most money for the LLS. These funds are used to support the research of blood cancer treatments, fund education, and information, and help families impacted by blood cancer.

His commitment to fundraising began in earnest after seeing a video of a young boy with leukemia. “I was shown a video of a little kid that had been diagnosed with leukemia at 7. I saw how his entire life was pretty much taken from him. It was really touching and heart-wrenching for me, and that’s when I decided to put as much effort as possible” toward the fundraising competition.

The team’s fundraising result of $317,724 and regional win have him in the running for the national competition, for which winners will be announced in June. He is the first African American and youngest student to win Student of the Year Award.

Samuel has been coming to Martha’s Vineyard in the summer for years, but is now getting used to life on Island in the off-season. “Coming from L.A., which is loud and noisy, to a smaller space is definitely a big change for me. It’s way quieter and colder,” he said. “But I feel like the people here are really welcoming.”

Samuel has also assimilated into the school community by joining clubs like the Mime- singer and Vocal Ensemble. “I’m also doing the modern theater class with [theater teacher] Brooke Hardman-Ditchfield, which is really amazing. We’re doing a lot of work with actors in old Holly- lywood, and playwrights that have changed the course of theater, such as [Konstantin Stanislavski]. It’s really a good experience for me,” he said. “I hope to be a part of [the school play] next year. I came a bit too late this year to do it.”

Samuel is looking forward to continuing fundraising for causes that inspire him.

“Now that I’ve had this experience, I definitely want to do some more, whether it’s for more blood cancer patients or something in the arts,” he said. 

Grassroots Club volunteers in Boston

BY JULIA SAYRE AND ANDREA MORSE

After months of prepa- ration, the Grassroots Club of Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) traveled to Bos- ton on March 25 and 26 to participate in Common Cathedra- dal’s CityReach program. Students spent Friday night learning about homelessness, slept overnight on the floor of Old West Church on Cambridge Street in Boston, and then helped run a clothing distribution event for members of Bos- ton’s unhoused population on Saturday morning.

CityReach was established in 1996 as an overnight ur- ban outreach program for students. Participants from around the commonwealth travel to Boston to learn about homelessness from the City- Reach staff, the majority of whom are currently or have previously been homeless. “Typically, students sleep on the floor of Common Cathedra- nal next to Boston Com- mon in sleeping bags, but this year participants were divided between multiple churches due to COVID-19 protocols. "It enables young people to have a night where they experience discomfort,” said Grassroots Club advisor Leigh Fairchild-Coppolotti. “Although it’s not the comfort of being outside in the elements or feeling un- safe, it’s still an integral part of the program.”

On Friday night, City- Reach participants pre- pared bagged lunches to distribute to homeless people on Saturday. Then on Saturday morning, par- ticipants set up different stations for clothing, blan- kets, toiletries, hats, and mittens. Once the distribu- tion day commenced, the homeless people were able to visit each station and “shop” for themselves.

Grassroots Club member junior Cali Giglio believes the donations are not the most important aspect of the trip. “It’s not necessarily about food, money, or cloth- ing. It’s about building rela- tionships, and seeing a new perspective,” she said. The CityReach staff guides “intentional walks” around Boston to share their experi- ence of living on the streets and explain the challenges of living without housing. Calls found many aspects of the trip eye-opening, in- cluding personal anecdotes from the CityReach staff. “There was a time where I thought, ‘I can’t wait to go home,’ and then I was, like, ‘Wait, the [CityReach staff] don’t have a home to go to,” she said. “The trip made me feel more grateful for the life I have.”

When speaking with homeless people, junior Clyde Smith heard about experiences that were un- familiar to him. “I learned things that would be shock- ing for us that are pretty regular for many home- less people,” he said. “Two people I spoke with both said they had been mugged in the past few days.”

Ms. Fairchild-Coppolotti has come away with a clear message each time she has chaperoned the trip. “It makes such a difference when people just say hello and acknowledge one an- other and show some basic respect for other people’s dig- nity,” she said.

Senior Stephanie De Oliveira feels similarly. “The CityReach trip made me realize that a little really does go a long way. Even the tiniest amount of clothes and food will make someone’s day so much better,” she said. “Just providing them with the basic human essentials and making people feel seen and heard goes a long way.”

For Ms. Fairchild-Coppolotti, the CityReach trip reminds her how important it is for students to learn in alternative environments. “It reinforces for me how important it is for young people to do something that is separate from school and academic program- ming,” she said. “It’s a great reminder that sometimes the most valuable learning experiences happen outside of a classroom.”

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