

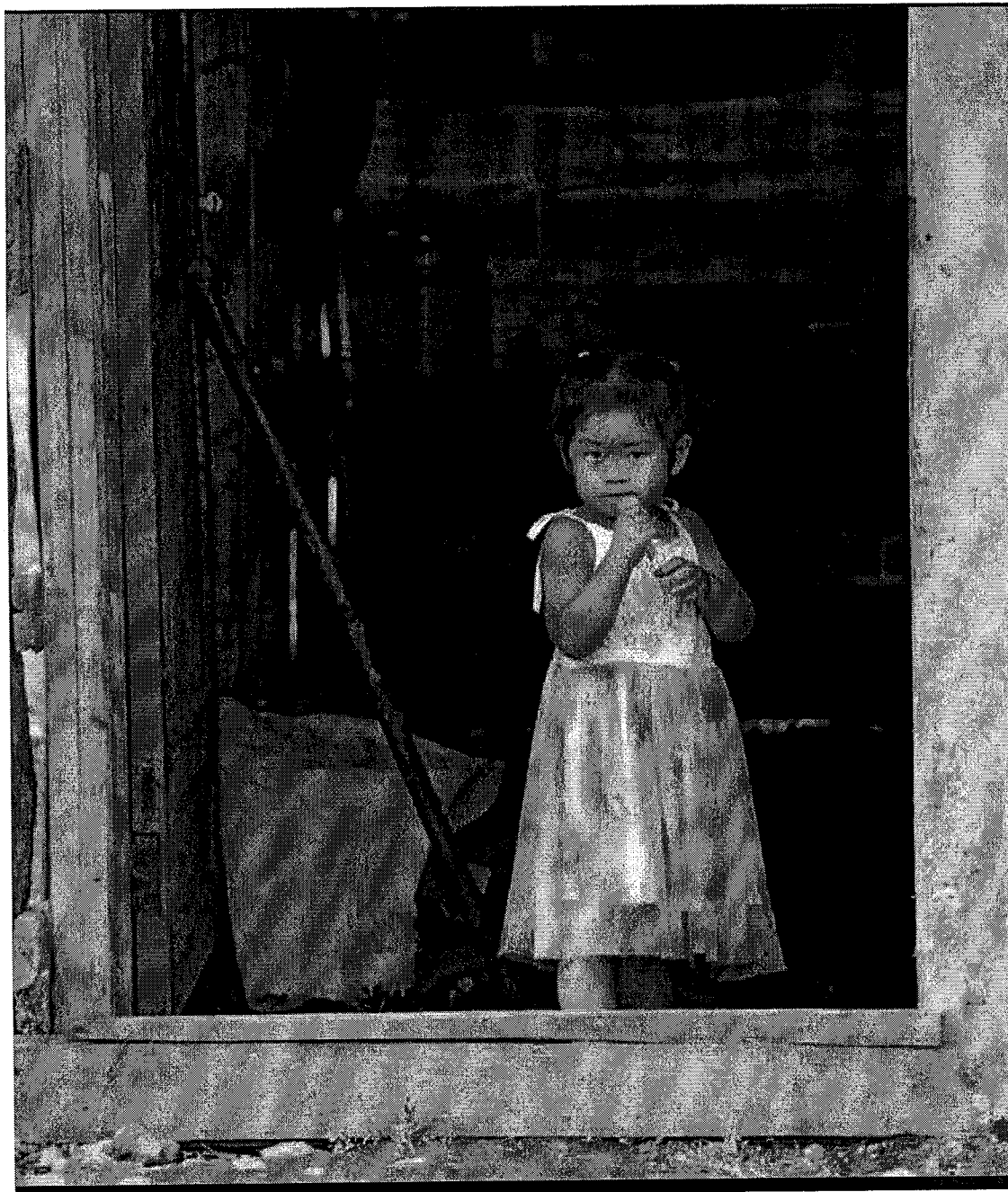


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Perspectives

Serving the Community

BY KAREN DOSS BOWMAN

Elihu (Eli) Miles '95 understands the difference a caring role model can make in a young person's life. Growing up in New York City, Eli went to the Boys' Club of New York Jefferson Park Clubhouse every afternoon. The man who ran the educational program, known to the boys as "Griffin," opened Eli's eyes to a world of opportunity, even taking him on a college tour when he was just nine years old. Eli recalls spending time every day in the man's office, soaking in his stories about his journey to college.

"I remember thinking how I wanted that experience," says Eli, a graduate of Oberlin College who recently earned an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College. "It was because of Griffin's encouragement and interest in me that it came to pass."

An academic scholarship earned through the Boys' Club program gave Eli the chance to study at independent, college-preparatory schools during his junior and senior high years, including George School, where he learned even more about the value of service.

"At George School, I learned that communities thrive and everyone benefits when service becomes a core value," says Eli, now a senior consultant with strategy and technology consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton. As a George School student, Eli participated in a domestic service trip to Homestead, Florida. He and his classmates worked alongside local residents to help rebuild their homes in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew. "I learned the most important thing about service is having the willingness to help and a genuine desire to give without receiving anything for it," Eli says.



ELIHU (ELI) MILES '95 is drawn to service opportunities that allow him to engage with adolescents and teenagers.

Since graduating from George School, he has participated in a service project every year. Wanting to repay the kindness shown to him during his youth, Eli is now drawn to service opportunities that allow him to engage with adolescents and teenagers. A former mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters in Massachusetts, he established a mentoring program while a student at Oberlin and has been a volunteer for the International Youth Leadership Institute.

"I'm a firm believer that we all have a role to play," says Eli. "I choose to give time because I believe it's a way for me to directly make an impact and to give, based on the fact that I was a recipient of a lot of mentoring and tutelage as a young kid. It's a way for me to be personally invested and give back to my community."

For decades, George School students have participated in service projects, from tutoring local school children or organizing a clothing drive to traveling overseas to help repair schools and health clinics. Like Eli, many have developed a personal ethic of service they carry into their adult lives.

Betsy Day Darlington '56 has contributed to saving thousands of acres of land and preserving plant and wildlife habitat in the Finger Lakes region of New York, as a full-time volunteer for twenty years with Finger Lakes Land Trust. Recently retired, she is now a part-time volunteer for the land trust. She has done a little of everything towards the organization's goals, such as negotiating conservation easements, editing and writing for the quarterly newsletter, recruiting and supervising volunteers, and overseeing the stewardship of the protected lands.



BETSY DAY DARLINGTON '56, NAT CASE '83, AND ROBERT GANZ '69 share their lessons from their lifelong commitments to service.

"In the process of working out the details of the conservation easements, you get to know the land, and you meet wonderful people who care deeply about their land," says Betsy. "These places, aside from their intrinsic value, have a human value. My own feeling is that a healthy environment is a basic human right."

While participating in service gives volunteers an opportunity to help others, it also helps them to hone personal and professional skills, such as leadership abilities and interpersonal communication.

"We're not here just to look after ourselves, we're here to look out for the world," Robert explains. "We are so blessed, and there is a real obligation to share those blessings with other people."

Betsy, for example, says she has learned a practical life lesson of accepting disappointment after spending months or years trying to preserve a piece of land only to have the deal fall through.

"That's part of any job—you don't always succeed," Betsy says. "But when you do succeed, it's very fulfilling."

As a George School student, Betsy cleaned and painted inner-city Philadelphia homes as a participant in many weekend service projects. Also during those years, she participated in an

American Friends Service Committee summer service trip to the Lummi Indian Reservation in Washington state.

"All schools should have service opportunities or requirements, and this was perhaps the most important way in which George School was a cut above many other places," says Betsy, who holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology and sociology, along with an LPN, from the University of Minnesota. A violinist for a local, professional chamber orchestra and former chair of Ithaca's Conservation Advisory Council, Betsy has also taught natural science as a volunteer in an Ithaca elementary school since 1971.

Service can be an important part of a volunteer's religious faith. Nat Case '83 of Minneapolis, Minnesota, a member of Twin Cities Friends Meeting, has volunteered since 2001 with Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS), a nationwide, inter-faith visitation program for federal and military prisoners. PVS was inspired by the Quaker tradition of caring for prisoners and is headquartered at Friends Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Nat travels once a month to visit four to five prisoners at the Federal Correctional Institution in Sandstone, Minnesota, over an hour's drive from his home. Prisoners tend to be society's forgotten people, he explains, and the program offers the opportunity for them to reconnect with, and receive encouragement from, the world around them.

Nat is uncomfortable using the term "service" to describe his volunteer work. Instead, he thinks this kind of work is simply a responsibility—just

a normal part of life, like working or eating or breathing. For Nat, doing his on-campus service (co-op) jobs as a George School student helped to reinforce the idea that some things are everyone's responsibility.

"It's important to recognize and work with a group larger than one's self and one's family," says Nat, a Carleton College graduate and a cartographer for Hedberg Maps. "To me, it's just a part of being human. Some of our work is about feeding ourselves, some is about our family, and some is about a wider network of humanity."

For attorney Robert Ganz '69 of Albany, New York, service-learning experiences at George School—particularly a summer work camp in Tanzania, where he worked alongside African students to build their school—reinforced the values he learned from his Jewish faith. He points to a concept in Jewish teaching known as "Tikkun Olam," which means "repairing the world."

"Working side-by-side with African students to help build a facility for their school gave me an enormous amount of satisfaction and feeling that we were living the values that George School

taught, not just talking about them," says Robert, who earned his bachelor's degree at the University of Rochester and his JD at Catholic University of America.

These days, Robert estimates that he spends twenty to thirty hours each month in community service for organizations such as the Northeast Association for the Blind, the Guilderland Public Library, and his synagogue, Ohav Shalom in Albany, New York. He has made efforts to instill the value of service in the culture of his law firm, Ganz Wolkenbreit and Siegfeld. When the firm celebrated its twentieth anniversary two years ago, for example, the staff and sixty clients spent a day staffing the Capital Region Food Bank in Albany, New York. They donated nearly \$25,000 to the food bank and contributed about two hundred work-hours for the day.

"We're not here just to look after ourselves, we're here to look out for the world," Robert explains. "We are so blessed, and there is a real obligation to share those blessings with other people."

Alumni Profile:
Johanna Schneider '08



How have you pursued an interest in service since graduating from George School?
I am a junior at George Washington University in Washington DC and I volunteer as much as I can with a local animal shelter and the volunteer club, Circle K. Service brings me joy in a way that nothing else can. I love connecting with new people and am particularly interested in the homeless populations of DC. I try to support them in any way possible.

How have your George School service experiences influenced you?

George School is what opened my eyes to the gift of service. I went on a service trip to India, which showed me that the poorest people are also often the happiest. The Indian children's openness and willingness to love us strangers touched my heart deeply. That trip set me on a path to my college major, international relations, which I hope to use to make a positive difference in the world through humanitarian work with the government or an NGO.

What advice would you offer to current George School students about their service requirement?

In the end, it does not matter where you do it. You can get the same wonderful feeling anywhere. Cross-cultural experiences are amazing, but so is being with George School students whom you may not have been close to before and sharing a situation where your willingness to serve is put to good use and you can feel helpful.