The summer before my junior year in high school I had a life changing experience going to New York City for ten days doing service projects and helping the homeless. I was able to go to all five boroughs there, and I feel like I really experienced the true New York City. Throughout my ten days there I worked at a lot of soup kitchens, food pantries, and homeless shelters. I also worked with many refugees. Everything I did was beyond amazing, but there was one thing that I really will never forget because it especially impacted me.

We were in groups of four and were given a challenge that with two dollars a person to feed ourselves and one homeless person. My group and I all decided to combine our money so we had eight dollars. We walked all over one area of New York comparing prices of local grocery stores and street vendors selling food to see how we could make the most of our money. We ended up buying at about four places and with only eight dollars we got a lot for our money! We bought a loaf of bread, mayo, a package of salami, bag of chips, bananas, and two water bottles. (Yes, I still really remember all of that!) We were quite proud with our smart shopping and our purchases for only eight dollars.

Now we just had to find people to feed. As we were walking through a park there was a group of seven people and I smiled and one the men yelled at me saying, “You have very beautiful blue eyes!” So then we decided to stop and talk to them. When they realized we were going to give them food at first they did not want to accept it, but then when they realized we would stay and eat and talk and hang with them they were very excited and let us stay. Hanging out with these people became the most amazing and fun time ever! I really think we were meant to run into these people in the park that day. We ended up having fun secret handshakes with them, making all these jokes, telling us about their lives, and just having such a fun time! We stayed with them for about three hours. We just could not leave, we were having such a good time! When we did have to finally leave, we did our special handshakes, gave hugs, and we had a little bit of change from the food that we tried to give them. Money did not mean anything to them though. They would not accept it and one guy said, “What you guys did with us was way more
than any amount of money is worth. So many people walk by us everyday and most of them don’t even bother looking or smiling. You guys stopped, had a meal with us, and made a real good time out of it. In the rest of my life I don’t think I will ever meet anyone like you all.”

I think these people may have impacted me more than I impacted them. That was an amazing day and such an eye opening amazing experience. Even now, over two years later, I still think about these people and wonder how they are doing.