

DAILY POINT OF LIGHT

SEASONED FUND-RAISER BY AGE 12, SANYA PIRANI SHARPENS PERSUASIVE SKILLS, EXPANDS WAYS TO HELP POOR, HOMELESS

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Sanya Pirani, a seventh-grader at Hidden Oaks Middle School in Prior Lake, a suburb of Minnesota’s Twin Cities, is already a seasoned fund-raiser and volunteer. Sanya, 12, is a youth ambassador for her local Community Action Partnership (CAP) Agency and has embarked on numerous charitable projects, including collecting diapers, socks and food for the needy, buying toys for families at Christmas and raising funds for children in other nations, including Haiti. She’s even formed her own nonprofit, [Sanya’s Hope for Children](#), “We don’t keep any money we raise,” Sanya notes. “It’s 100 percent nonprofit.”

How did you get started?

“I was 7 and a half years old. My mother was watching a YouTube video of a child in a war-torn country. The little girl was sitting on the ground, with torn clothing and no shoes, and I felt so sorry for her. I ran up to my room, and my mother followed me, asking what was wrong.”

Sanya says her mother assured her it was a good thing to feel compassion for others, but she wanted to act on her feelings. The then-third grader began holding bake sales and garage sales to raise money for disadvantaged children in her own state. She got the idea to make bookmarks and sell them for \$5 each. She sold 500 of them. She donated the money to a local crisis nursery. When her grandmother gave her \$100 toward the purchase of an American Girl doll, Sanya used the money instead to buy 100 packets of M&M candy. She sold each one for \$5 and donated the \$500 to the crisis nursery as well.



What inspires you to volunteer?

“Doing service and helping others gives me satisfaction. Making a difference in people’s lives is a main reason – even if you can do a little bit, it can go a long way. It makes me happy, so that’s another reason why I do it. It helps me learn valuable lessons, like, life is hard and fund-raising is very difficult and how it takes a lot to really achieve something. It teaches me great communication skills.”

What have you learned through your experiences as a volunteer?

“I’ve learned that fund-raising is hard. It’s very hard to get people to help if they’re not interested. We actually hear more no’s than yeses. Our goal is to help children, which I think, impacts a lot of people –and when you help children you also have to help families, which is a broader subject. I’ve found that when I speak at places where I’ve been invited to speak, more people are willing to help. We ask a lot of people for help, and some come and go. But we’ve had a couple of partners that have stayed with us and helped us fund-raise, too.”

Did it make you discouraged at first to hear so many no’s?

“Kind of. But my mother taught me it’s normal to hear no. Now I don’t feel discouraged at all. I just know that some people feel differently about different things.”

What are you working on right now?

“We are sewing bags for the homeless. We fill them with books and toys and school supplies. We have this big packing event in our basement every year where we get volunteers – we try to bring in high schoolers from my district and many kids from my school. We have lots of fun putting things into the bags and at Christmastime, we give them to families and children at the homeless shelter.”



Why is it important for others to give back?

“You get many blessings in return. You get what you give. If you give kindness to others, you’re going to get kindness back. It’s this big boomerang. I really think that starting volunteering at a young age is going to help you later in life.”

If another middle-school student reads this and wants to do something similar, what is your advice?

“Think of what you are passionate about. It doesn’t have to be as broad as what I’m doing: you could choose helping with mental illness, food, education or shelter. Start with a little something, like a nonprofit that works with that or doing a bake sale in your neighborhood. Start small, it will gradually get bigger. Shoot for the stars and you’ll get to the moon.”

Do you want to make a difference like Sanya? Visit [All for Good](#) for local volunteer opportunities.

Post written by Kay Nolan