



Washington "Alex" Loeffler receives Presidential Gold Service Award for volunteering

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Nothing is brighter than when high school students already understand the importance of community service.

Father McGivney Catholic High School junior, Washington "Alex" Loeffler, recently received the **Presidential Gold Service Award** for his outstanding commitment to helping others in his community.

Loeffler devoted his last several summer breaks to volunteering at **Camp Ondessonk** in Ozark, Ill. Each summer, he has lived and worked at camp for six weeks at a time, helping youth campers learn camp skills while helping them develop into respectful, spiritually enriched young boys and girls. He attended Camp Ondessonk as a camper since fifth grade and for the last two years, he has been volunteering to give back to youth campers the same great experiences he had received.

Each quarter, the entire school body serves the needs of their surrounding community with an all-school service day. Although, some students at FMCHS do not stop there. Rather, they go above and beyond this call of service to their communities.

“Volunteering and giving back to my community is very important to me,” Loeffler said. “It's a part of who I am. It's great to get this award and be recognized for what I've done but I did this without even knowing anything about the award. When I found out about it, and that I was being considered to receive it, I thought it was really neat.”

The President's Volunteer Service Award is a civil award bestowed by the **President of the United States**. Established by an executive order by **George W. Bush**, the award was established to honor volunteers that give hundreds of hours per year helping others

through the **President's Council on Service and Civic Participation**. The award can be granted to individuals, families and organizations located throughout the United States. Depending on the amount of service hours completed, individuals can receive the Bronze, Silver, Gold.

At **Father McGivney Catholic High School in Maryville**, all students are required to perform community service hours. These service hours are to follow the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy and are intended to follow the school's mission of **"Serving the Culture of Life"**. They should all promote human dignity and respect for life.

Loeffler said he loves all the components of volunteering: "There really isn't just one thing that stands out in my mind that I enjoy the most. I just really enjoy being able to give back at camp to make sure kids have the same great camp experience I had. Seeing them happy makes it all worth it."

In the future, Loeffler plans to enlist in the Army and give back to his country.

"During my senior year of high school next year, I plan to apply at the **U.S. Military Academy at West Point**," he said. "To go there has been a dream of mine since I've been little. I also have my eye on the ROTC program here at SIUE."

The Father McGivney youth closed by saying it is a great honor to receive this award from the President of the United States.

"My grandfather loves both Bush presidents because they both served in the military," he said. "He, along with my great grandfather, great uncles, two aunts and two uncles all served in the military on my mom's side of the family. Serving and helping others is in my blood I guess you could say. I plan to carry on that tradition, so this award it's definitely a privilege to have received."