

Student travels to Kentucky to help those in poverty-stricken areas

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"I'm not someone that likes attention. Everything I do in my life I'm doing for God. I'm not doing it for praise," Jordan Wade (senior, middle level education) said.

St. Thomas More University Parish awarded its annual Community Involvement Award this year to a student in the Catholic Student Association who has traveled to Kentucky to help the poor living in Appalachia.

Wade served as president of CSA for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

During this time, she helped the organization grow from seven people to around 30 active members.

She said she also helped change the interest factors of the group to make CSA more interesting and fun.

Wade described all she did for CSA as her greatest triumph. In recognition of her efforts, St. Thomas More University Parish made her the 2016 recipient of its Community Involvement Award.

The award is given to someone within the parish based on what he or she has done for both the parish and the community.

Wade is the first IUP student to win the award.

Wade said the award meant a lot coming from the parish.

"It was very overwhelming. I feel so fortunate to have a great relationship with [Fr. Alan Polczynski] and the whole [parish] staff. I feel part of their family."

Wade has also been traveling to the Appalachian region of Kentucky regularly since 2014 to help its community, which is one of the poorest in the nation.

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She started visiting Kentucky as a part of its annual Work Fest. Every spring break, college students from across the country travel to Kentucky to help fix houses.

Wade went with other members from CSA on the trip. She said she fell in love with Kentucky during her first year there. It was also where she felt called to take on a larger role within CSA.

"I felt it in my heart to take on the president title," Wade said. "I didn't want anything to happen to [CSA] because I needed that group."

Since her first trip in Kentucky, Wade has gone back to volunteer there for the past two spring breaks and also for parts of the past two summers.

During the summers she has volunteered in elderly housing and the children's summer camp. Elderly housing consists of different tasks such as building ramps and porches for families.

"[Summer camp] encompasses everything that I love because I get to be in Kentucky, live with other volunteers and help kids," Wade said. "And not just any kids, but kids who don't have a lot."

Currently, Wade is doing her student teaching at United Junior/Senior High School in Armagh.

Additionally, she works after school at the Evergreen Boys and Girls Club, where she is the lead



(Submitted photo)
Jordan Wade (senior, middle level education) has displayed philanthropy in both her work with the Catholic Student Association and with underprivileged people in Kentucky.



(Stephanie Bachman/ The Penn)
Wade's name was added to the plaque when she received the award.

staff member. Her job mostly entails organizing programs for students about different topics such as running a business, forensic science, fine arts and STEM.

Wade described it as a combination of camp and teaching.

After her December graduation, she will spend the rest of the school year working at Evergreen before volunteering for a year in Kentucky starting in June.

She offered some advice to other undergraduate students, especially those who are unsure of who

they are.

"Find the place where you belong and you can be 100 percent yourself and not worry about what other people think of you," Wade said. "Just be yourself and feel comfortable. Do not try and fit some mold."

"Don't be afraid to open your heart to God and really let him in and listen. More people will respect you for it than anything else."

Wade also encourages anyone to come to CSA, even if he or she is not Catholic.