

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Model of Justice Award Recipient: Samantha Abel**

Samantha Abel has a heart for the broader community and has exemplified our commitment to “serviam” through work with multiple local organizations and specific initiatives. During Samantha’s junior year, she partnered with a local St. Louis non-profit organization, Almost Home, to create a school-wide service project designed to help struggling teen mothers. Samantha organized a donation drive to provide the low-income families Almost Home serves with much-needed baby supplies. These efforts resulted in more than 100 items of clothing, hundreds of diapers and \$500 worth of toiletries being donated with more than 60% of Ursuline Academy’s student body participating in the program. As part of the initiative, Samantha and her classmates wrote notes of support and encouragement to each of the teen moms to show they were not alone in their struggles and that people were pulling for them to succeed.

Over the past year, Samantha has also spent countless hours working with the St. Louis Dream Center, a Christian outreach facility in North St. Louis City that includes a food pantry, homeless services, kids’ ministry programs and a local church. Her heart for helping one of St. Louis’ most underserved communities resulted from two separate week-long mission trips to Los Angeles and New York that opened her eyes to the power of Christian outreach to help address America’s growing homeless and impoverished population. In addition to logging more than 150 service hours at the St. Louis Dream Center, she is most proud of her ability to inspire others to serve along with her – recruiting more than 20 other volunteers to also work at the facility in various capacities. Her most recent work for the Dream Center is spearheading a children’s book drive to provide books to the kids they serve, realizing education and reading is the foundation for a better future.

Lastly, as a member of Ursuline’s Global Scholars Program, Samantha attended the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York last March. This inspired her to learn more about global issues and she recently spoke on Human

Sex Trafficking at a Diversity Conference for area high schools. She plans to continue to educate and inform the community about the severity of this issue to make an impact in any way she can. Samantha has a heart and passion for serving the underprivileged and realizes she has the ability to make a difference in our community and beyond.

Samantha is also very active in all aspects of Ursuline Academy: Student Council Secretary/Treasurer, varsity soccer and basketball, National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta and student ambassador. As Secretary/Treasurer on Student Council she has chaired spirit week, started service projects, planned Ursuline's mission week and much more. Her leadership roles at Ursuline has made her passionate about the education they provide, prompting her to speak at open houses, high school nights and be a part of the Capitol Campaign. As a member of the UN club in collaboration with the diversity team she is currently planning an all school showing of "He Named Me Malala". Samantha's positive attitude and compassion for others shines through her work and volunteer efforts! We have no doubt that she will continue to be a role model for her peers and will use her gifts to positively shape the lives of others. We are honored to nominate Samantha Abel for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Model of Justice Award.

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