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When I first came to college, like a lot of people I had trouble with managing my time. I had a lot of things I needed to do, things I thought I should be doing, and of course things I wanted to do instead. I wanted to do everything, and I tried. I made a lot of to-do lists.

The problem was, I never gave any one thing my full attention. I would read a book cover to cover, but by the time I had finished, I wouldn't remember anything I had read - had been thinking the whole time about what I should or could have been doing instead.

Since I was a Bonner, for 10 hours out of my week, I had to do only one thing - Bonner stuff and service work. At the time I was volunteering at Hand in Hand Adult Day Care, so I went for a few hours at a time, talked to people, played a lot of Skip-Bo and Connect Four.

It took me a while to realize that when I was talking to someone with Alzheimer's, for example, or some other disability, it took 110% of my attention to get the full picture of what they were saying. I had to really learn to listen. For that time, I

was forced to stop fretting over my to-do lists and own problems and just be there. and only there. And I really started to enjoy doing that.

When you do service, you say, I'm here to help - right? And I realized it was important to really mean that, to really be there completely. Sometimes you have to move physically somewhere – this summer I worked at a women's prison where I literally had to leave everything from the outside world behind to do my service - but most of the time it's just a matter of being mentally present. And I try to apply that to my every day life - in my school work, my relationships, even my leisure time. I think it's made me better – a better student, a better friend – it's been really good for me.

I think we can apply this to our communities too, and the way we interact with each other. To look at how we can be here for each other, really say, I'm here to help.

So in the real world, you're not always logging hours for your time. But I've learned that there is always an opportunity to serve and always a way to make ourselves more present for each other, to give of yourself to something that really has nothing to do with you.

I've really enjoyed the things I've gotten to do through the Bonner scholarship, and I've learned a lot – it has shaped me in a lot of ways I didn't expect, and I think I can speak for all the students here in saying, "Thanks!"