



The Princeton Club of Rochester

Matthew J. Sullivan
Senior, Canisius High School

“It is one thing to dream about making a difference in the world; it is quite another to plow through the obstacle course of red tape and apathy that it takes to actually make that difference. Matthew is everything that we want the next generation to be: he is full of an infectious youthful spirit that is hard to deny, and more importantly, he recognizes privilege for what it is and seeks to try to bring about true social justice.”

That is how Canisius High School Counselor Anne Marie Moscovic describes Matthew’s leadership abilities. Matthew seized on an opportunity to educate and excite young students across ethnicities and races by creating Students Together on an Empowering Mission Inc. (STEM Jr.). The organization provides tutoring and mentoring to under-served youth by bridging gaps that hinder equal access to education leading to careers in STEM fields. Matthew says that since he initiated the program last year, he has seen impressive results:

“Students are learning how vital it is to knock down barriers and remove biases. It’s helping us grow by promoting an understanding and respect among kids of all races, religions, and cultures through education. Our mentors have become aware of social policies and their effect on our communities. We have realized that some after-school programs provide a haven, a meal, and resources that most take for granted.”

Whether helping kids with science projects, providing backpacks with school supplies, supervising and sponsoring field trips, or collecting clothing for job interviews, the interaction between the privileged and the under-served exposes students on both sides to real-life situations that promote respect and understanding. It creates a bond that breaks down barriers that would ordinarily divide them. Matthew recognizes that that is more important now than ever:

“We’re living in a politically heightened time surrounded by voices of a divided country, and finding ways to bridge the separation of ethnic groups is crucial to take advantage of the differences that make us stronger. It opens doors to discussions on race and disparities in education and provides the opportunity to embrace a diverse and inclusive world that is often foreign to both sides.”

Matthew says he hopes to bring STEM Jr. to colleges, high schools, and businesses across the region, as these efforts could significantly boost the educational potential of our country.

“If every community leader and school embraced and promoted these goals, we could become the generation that levels the educational playing field...I may have started on a mission of advocacy, but my venture transformed into a journey of discovery.”

Matthew, your extraordinary activism and insight are to be lauded. Congratulations!