

Restoring Dignity Through Small Details: My Contribution Sorting Coats for Children

On March 25, 2026, I participated in a Sorting Coats service-learning activity with my peers Abby, Janessa, Natalia, Aemish, and others. During this activity, we helped organize and prepare coats that would be donated to children in schools. My role was to sort through the coats, check their condition, and help decide which ones were ready to be given away and which needed to be washed or had small improvements.



Coats sorted out by students



Cristina Alves at the service event

As I worked, I started to understand the deeper purpose behind it. These coats were not just items. They were something children would wear every day, especially during cold seasons. The quality and appearance of each coat mattered more than I expected. This became even clearer when I spoke with a leader from Rotary International. She explained how important it is not only to donate, but to donate with care.

One moment stayed with me. She said that if a coat had a stain, she would take the time to place a patch on it so it could still look beautiful. That level of care really impacted me. It showed me that service is not only about giving what we have, but about making sure what we give respects the person receiving it. That perspective changed how I saw the activity. It resonated in my heart for a long time after the activity.

This experience connects to the idea of community service at the local level, as well as to broader goals such as reducing inequality and supporting families. While organizations like the United Nations talk about global development, I could see how those ideas are applied in small, local actions. Many children in Utah still face challenges that are not always visible, and projects like this help fill those gaps in a practical way.

I can also connect this activity to the Student-Engaged Learning model. Instead of only discussing service or social issues in class, I was directly involved in a project that responds to a real need. I observed how attention to detail, organization, and care all contribute to making a service project succeed. It also showed me how leadership can be expressed through actions, not only through positions.

Emotionally, this activity had a strong effect on me. It reminded me of my work in Brazil, where I helped raise funds to support children in vulnerable communities. I felt a sense of peace while doing this work, something calm and grounding. It made me realize how much I value service, and how connected I feel to this type of mission.

The Rotary leader also left a strong impression on me. Her dedication and care were very genuine. There was a sense that every coat we prepared would directly impact a child. After talking to her, I asked about other opportunities to serve, and I told her I would like to be involved in the future when I have more time available. That conversation stayed with me because it showed me a clear example of the kind of impact one person can have.

Overall, this service activity may look simple, but it carried a strong meaning for me. It taught me more about the challenges some children in Utah are facing, and the importance of supporting families. More than that, it confirmed something personal. This is the kind of work I see myself doing in the future. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life.

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