



PHOTO: GRAINNE QUINLAN

Dedicated to Service

Through Kiril Sokoloff '65 and the Sokoloff Prize, students learn that living generously is a development of the heart and a love you can count on

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In mid-September, Kate Daniels, the School's dean of student support and director of community engagement, posted a signup sheet for students to set up and stock a community food pantry at Christ the King Parish, a Catholic church in downtown Concord. Even though the volunteer opportunity fell on a surprise Saturday off from classes, response to the call was overwhelming and Daniels closed the filled-up sheet after just 10 minutes.

Three days later, 50 students and a small group of St. Paul's School adults that included Daniels, Rector Kathy Giles, Vice Rector for School Life Theresa Ferns '84, P'19,

Associate Director of Admissions Michelle Hung P'29 and Math Teacher Sean Ryan teamed up at a local warehouse to load donations from the New Hampshire Food Bank onto U-Haul trucks, before moving to the pantry's new location behind the parish's church on South Main Street. There, the volunteers worked bucket brigade-style alongside parishioners to move and shelf canned and boxed goods, toiletries and other items.

The collaboration between Christ the King Parish and St. Paul's is longstanding — for years, students and staff have volunteered at the food pantry, which served 8,165

individuals in 2024, and over the summer, the School joined nearly three dozen other local nonprofits and civic and religious organizations to support the parish's \$2.55 million fundraising goal to build the new pantry. But even Daniels, who spearheads SPS's work with local nonprofits and public schools, was impressed by the eagerness of students to help.

"Not only was the turnout incredible, but the excitement everyone brought to the work was palpable," Daniels says. "For a lot of [the church members], it was quite emotional to see these students. To have all these young, strong bodies come out to help them was really amazing."

Guillermo Plata '28 was one of the volunteers. Originally from Colombia, Plata chose to attend SPS in part because of how the School builds service work into its education. So far, he has volunteered as a peer-to-peer tutor, donated his time to the local Red Cross, and last holiday season organized a "Toys for Tots" campaign on campus for nearby children. "My values align strongly with the School's motto of serving for the greater good and always being eager to support others during a time of adversity," he says.

Through the pantry project, Plata found the chance to make a tangible difference in the Concord community. "I thought I was going to be helping a local and small project, but I was proven wrong as I saw that the food pantry project provided massive amounts of food for thousands of less fortunate people," he says. "Seeing how the simple act of loading a truck and other actions made such a big change in other people's lives filled me with immense fulfillment. That sense of accomplishment — I wouldn't change it for anything, and it just motivates me to volunteer for even more opportunities."



SPS students, with Rector Kathy Giles and faculty members, helped load trucks to stock the food pantry's new location in Concord. The School also offered financial support for the project. "The real mover for me was the number of families that need support," said Rector Giles. "We look for ways to make a difference in the lives of children in our community."



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Plata isn't alone. From the Knitting Club's handmade hats and scarves for the Coalition to End Homelessness to the Friends Youth Mentoring Program and organizing STEM projects at the local middle school, students and student groups across the School have made service activities a central part of their SPS experience.

"Our kids are really busy," Daniels says. "There are a lot of demands on their time. But what we've found is that even with everything going on, many of them want to be part of something bigger than themselves. They want to be of service to a community and they want that service to be meaningful."

THE POWER OF SERVING OTHERS

In his 2007 book, "Why Good Things Happen to Good People," Dr. Stephen Post '69 argues that the act of giving yourself to others naturally elevates one's own health and happiness. Scientific research, much of which Post has shepherded, reveals that wellness rates increase and depression rates reduce for people who center selflessness and empathy in their lives. If you want to live longer, he contends, live more generously.

"I have one simple message to offer and it's this," writes Post, director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics at New York's Stony Brook University. "Giving is the most potent force on the planet. Giving is the one kind of love you can count on, because you can always choose it: It's always within your power to give. Giving will protect you your whole life long."

Kiril Sokoloff '65 needs no education on the power of serving others. A renowned global investment strategist and founder and chairman of the independent institutional global research firm 13D Research and Strategy, Inc., Sokoloff made a name for himself as a pioneer in the world of finance. As he did, however, Sokoloff also firmly planted both feet in the world of philanthropy.

“To have a compassionate view is to know the other person’s story,” says Sokoloff, who lives with his family in London. “To know where they came from. We’ve got a real epidemic of people feeling disconnected, and so empathy and compassion have never been more important than they are now.”

Sokoloff’s commitment to building deeper connections is born from the struggles he faced as a young man. The son of a prominent cancer research scientist, Sokoloff had a family connection to St. Paul’s School — his uncle, James Ramsey Hunt, was a member of the Form of 1923 — and he arrived on campus in the fall of 1962 as a Fourth Former, the start of a three-year journey that continues to impact him.

“St. Paul’s had a phenomenal education,” he says. “I don’t think you could have had a better education anywhere in the world. We worked incredibly hard. We had a paper due every week in every subject and we had a test every week in every subject. My first year, I got up at three o’clock in the morning to study. We studied the classics, we studied history, English, literature — we really got a fantastic education.”

Though unaware of it at the time, Sokoloff had already started to lose his hearing while a student at St. Paul’s. By his mid-twenties, he suffered from major hearing loss. And as his condition worsened, he was forced to contend with a world that seemed ill-equipped, or worse, uninterested, in dealing with him. “You see a blind person crossing the street and your first instinct is to want to help them,” he says. “But with deafness, people think you’re deaf and dumb. But I resolved to never give up.”



Daniels loves working with teenagers — their enthusiasm and energy, their ability to wrestle with big questions, their care and concern for others, and their optimism. Her hope is that they take what they learn at SPS and come up with innovative and exciting solutions to the world’s problems.

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In 1996, Sokoloff received a cochlear implant and began the hard work of learning to process speech all over again. “Deafness made me who I am,” Sokoloff told SPS students at a chapel talk in May 2025. “Deafness molded me. Deafness toughened me and softened me, shaped my character and the way I look at life. Switching your mind from the negative to the positive is really a development of the heart. A personal transformation. It is only adversity that makes you question who you are, how you must change and what you need to learn.”

Sokoloff brings that same determined spirit to his philanthropy, and his partnership with St. Paul’s has greatly elevated the School’s service work. In 2008, he endowed the Kiril Sokoloff Prize, which funds a Winter Term community service project proposed by a student in any form year and a more in-depth summer project proposed by one or more Fifth Formers who demonstrate a vision to make the world a better place through service for the good of humankind and who acts as an inspirational leader to their peers, classmates and the School.

Over the years, Sokoloff Prizes have funded a diverse range of projects: An in-house library and resource center at an addiction center in Idaho; a ballet program for underprivileged youth at a Harlem YMCA; material and volunteer support for a New Hampshire women’s shelter, and more. Sokoloff is proud of what the prize has accomplished, and the bold plans it has helped bring to fruition.

“The idea was to identify the most compassionate students and give them a stipend to go out and do something, and that’s what they’ve done,” says Sokoloff, who would like one day to expand the SPS program to more students.

Sokoloff’s vision is reflected in other parts of Millville life, too. In 2021, he endowed the Kiril Sokoloff ’65 Chair. Established to support a faculty member who is an inspirational leader in the School community, demonstrating compassion, kindness and engagement, the title is more than just an honor for past work. A new chair is named every four years and at its core is a mission to shape how compassion, and by extension community service, is nurtured at the School.

“It’s really important for our young people who are all burning inside with hormones and wondering what they’re going to do [with their lives] that they have somebody to talk to and know that they’re going to be received with compassion,” Sokoloff explains.

Daniels was the School’s inaugural Sokoloff Chair, which she held until this fall, when Humanities Teacher Beth Little was named to the position. Among the many things Daniels did during her tenure was to launch a “kindness curriculum” in 2023. The program, a mix of short lessons and group discussions delivered throughout the School’s biweekly dorm meetings, delves into the importance of positively connecting with others and the reverberations those acts, no matter how small, can have on a relationship and a community.

The work is very much a byproduct of the research of Dr. Stephen Post, whose book, says Daniels, has been influential. “When we do something kind for someone, it makes us feel good, happier, more optimistic,” says Daniels, who, in addition to her roles in community engagement and student support, advises the Yin Yoga Club and Knitting Club, oversees the Mindfulness program and serves as head of Manville House. “When people experience positive feelings like this, they are more apt to continue to be kind. And, when others are the recipients of kindness, they are more inclined to be kind to others.”

Sokoloff is not surprised by these findings. His deep interest in spirituality has grown into leading major workshops with the Dalai Lama, where’s he’s seen firsthand the power of positive connections. His own charitable work, too, has proven personally transformative, and that’s what he wants for others — that desire is what drives his continued support of SPS.

“I hope [out of the work they do], students will look at the world differently and not judge people without getting to know them,” he says. “All around us, people are being judged, countries are being judged, without understanding where they came from. [But] if you have an energy that is compassionate and kind, people immediately pick up on that. They may not consciously understand it, but they will gravitate toward you. They will trust you, and then they will confide in you and you’ll be happier.”



In his chapel remarks, Sokoloff shared that deafness gave him many precious gifts. “I grew as a human being and found compassion on a large scale, conquering the challenge of deafness,” he said. Now, one-on-one conversations mean more to him than anything.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

One of the major strengths of the School’s community service work is that it’s born out of longstanding partnerships. Locally, the School has deep ties with several Concord-based organizations, including not just Christ the King Parish, but also the Friendly Kitchen, which serves free meals to unhoused residents, as well as the Coalition to End Homelessness.

“We really think about how we want to support these organizations,” says Daniels, who has served as the secretary of the board of the Friendly Kitchen for more than 20 years. “It’s not a thing where we say, ‘We’re coming to do this for you.’ We have relationships with these organizations and learn what their needs are and how we can be helpful.”

Separately, a wide range of students and student groups have also lent their support to local organizations. The athletics teams alone maintain a robust schedule outside of practices and games. For several years, the girls cross country team has mentored local middle school runners, while members of the hockey team help coach the Junior Pelicans, a youth hockey program. The track and lacrosse teams also host sports clinics for local children, and the softball team hosts a wiffle ball tournament to benefit Thrive Survivor Support Center.