

## Recent alumna's gift is devoted to service, helping refugees

When Jannel Noelle Mariano '16 attended Dominican, the confidence and experience she gained through internships and immersion trips guided her toward a rewarding path of service focused on helping refugees integrate into American society.

“It’s important to be in my position now, especially at a critical time when people feel they aren’t welcomed in this country,” says Jannel, who works with Dominican Volunteers USA through Catholic Charities of Atlanta as a refugee resettlement specialist.

“I feel I can empower them, remind them that regardless of everything that's going on, they are human and should be reminded of that. I could not see myself doing any of this a year ago.”

Jannel identifies each refugee’s work skills and prepares them for the American work culture. She helps them create a resume, develop interview skills, then leads them to job opportunities with partners around Atlanta or close to where the refugees have other family and friends living in the U.S.

“Essentially our goal is to make sure every refugee who comes through is self-sufficient within the three months after arriving in America, and with that means finding a job,” says Jannel, who recently delivered holiday gifts to children of refugees.

Jannel’s “open arms” attitude was developed at Dominican, where she graduated last May with a degree in Public Health from the [School of Health and Natural Sciences](#). She minored in leadership and was a [Student Ambassador](#) captain. She participated in the [LeaderShape Summer Institute](#) in 2014 and last year was a social media intern for [College Debate 2016](#). She served internships in the County of Marin’s Department of Health and Human Services and with the Human Race through the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership.

“Those internships opened up my eyes to all these different issues going on in the world, especially with underprivileged populations, and how to go about working with them and identifying which programs need to be in place in order for them to succeed,” Jannel says.

With the support of Lianni Castro, assistant director of [Campus Ministry](#), Jannel participated in [service immersion trips](#) to El Salvador and Tijuana. Additionally, she served as a camp counselor and contributed to a Habitat for Humanity project in alternative spring break programs.

“Without those experiences and without Lianni encouraging me to apply I wouldn’t be where I am today,” Jannel says.

Jannel’s decision to devote a year of service after graduation was helped by [Rebecca Morgenstern](#) '14, who also upon graduation joined Dominican Volunteers USA. Rebecca now works as a public health nurse in Tuolumne County.

As for Jannel’s future? She has considered pursuing her Master’s in Public Health, but ideally would love to have a full-time job with a nonprofit organization, such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

“I envision myself continually doing work for those who need to be reminded that they are more than a label or a disease or whatever struggle it is they're having and are at the core human and should be treated and respected as that,” Jannel says. “I want to make a difference and want to be a part of something that is bigger than me.”

*December 15, 2016*