

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

Hinsdale Central's Jackson Steigbigel and Connor Devine join forces with Diveheart to help children, veterans and disabled

PHOTO BY DANIEL GARCIA

"Service above self" can be rare in the world, but two young high-school students from Hinsdale are setting an example for their peers and the community every month when they volunteer to help children, veterans and others with disabilities experience the freedom of zero-gravity and scuba-therapy through the Downers Grove-based non-profit Diveheart.

Jackson and Connor always approach their volunteer work at Diveheart with a smile on their faces. Their kindness, consideration and empathy when helping Diveheart participants with disabilities is refreshing to observe. Their patience and workmanlike attitudes inspire volunteers of all ages who surround them at the Diveheart Scuba Experience programs.

"These young men, with their humility and earnest approach to service, give us great hope that the future of our community and the humanity that contributes to its success, is in good hands," said Jim Elliott, founder and president of Diveheart.

JACKSON, WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN SCUBA-DIVING WITH DIVEHEART?

My first dive was when I was ten [years old], in a pool on vacation. I was hooked. I loved the feeling and wanted to do it again. About two years later, I became PADI-certified and went diving a couple of times. At 15, I was extremely lucky to be get the opportunity to help out at Diveheart. At the time, I knew very little about the organization, but

after my first time there, I knew that this was the perfect place for me. The people at Diveheart are incredible, their knowledge about scuba-diving is limitless, and their passion to help others enjoy the sport is inspiring. They have taught me so many things; not just scuba-diving, but being able to do things that you thought you couldn't. The thing that makes Diveheart special is, they focus on what you can do, rather than what you can't. They have countless programs over the U.S. helping anyone they can. You also do not need to be a certified diver to volunteer at Diveheart. There are a number of opportunities that one can volunteer for, but if you are interested, you can become certified through Diveheart.

CONNOR, IS THIS YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH SCUBA-DIVING?

No; I was certified several years ago, and have been on two [diving] trips before, [in] Turks & Caicos and Grand Cayman with my family. My whole family is certified. I also did my certification dives [at] Haigh Quarry in Kankakee. My interest in Diveheart started a year ago, because I needed service hours at Nazareth Academy. It looked intriguing, because I like scuba-diving and thought it would be fun. Now I go every month with Jackson, just because I enjoy doing it and helping out others. It is really cool to see the smile on people's faces when they get in the water.

To read more about Jackson Steigbigel and Connor Devine's scuba diving story, please visit www.HinsdaleMag.com.

