

Kids with Character

This recognition showcases students who have made a difference by accepting responsibility, showing kindness, valuing others' concerns, helping resolve conflicts and honoring their commitments.

Steven Mentzer, 18, was nominated for The Chronicle-Telegram's Kids With Character series for his hard work, great maturity and service to others.

Steven was nominated by Donna Shurr, the advisor of a community service club of which he is president at Oberlin High School.

"Steven has shown great maturity and leadership throughout his high school career," Shurr said. "Steven's energy is contagious - younger students are often motivated to excel by watching his dedication to academics, extracurriculars and service."

His older sister, Rachel, was president of the service group, called Interact Club, and the now-high school senior has followed in her footsteps. Shurr said that Steven started volunteering five years ago with his sister in a program to feed elementary children each week. His time there led to him volunteering with Oberlin Week-day Community Meals, a program that serves dinner to the needy.

"He's been very faithful, once a week," Shurr said. "And now he sits on the nonprofit board that runs that program. He's learned how to run a commercial dishwasher, he interacts with the diners who come, and he's very gracious and loving and kind.

He's also got other kids involved in it."

In addition to Interact Club, Steven is in art club, is vice president of student council, was the marching band's field commander and helped to organize prom last year.

Shurr said she admired Steven's decision to take a risk by studying abroad for a year in Taiwan to learn Mandarin Chinese during his sophomore year. On the way there, his connecting flight in Japan was cancelled, but that didn't fluster him. "(Even) with the language barrier, he was able to help the other students who were flying in from other countries," Shurr said. "His mother and I were more concerned than him."



Steven

He's now fluent in Mandarin and aspires to travel to other countries during his undergraduate studies after high school.

"I just think he's a pretty exceptional young man, and whatever he chooses to do, it's gonna be amazing," Shurr said. "He does have a heart for serving people. He does it because he believes in it."

Steven lives in Oberlin with his mother, Jenny.