I volunteer at a day camp run by the local community organization. The camp is for kids ages 6 to 12. I always volunteer to run activities for the youngest kids.  I really like using my imagination to come up with fun games to keep the kids active and having fun.  It’s really rewarding to have parents come up and ask me if I will baby sit for them because of the stories their kids tell at home about their great counselor Owen.

Each summer I also attend a camp run by the YMCA for families from across Ontario.  There is a family that comes each year with their adopted son Ronin.  He has behavior problems and has trouble fitting in with the other kids.  I decided to help out and took him under my wing for the week.  Their parents were so thankful that I helped their son fit in and have fun, that they write a special “kudos” thank you message that they read in front of the whole camp every year.

My experience working as an umpire in the local neighborhood T-ball league has also taught me a lot about dealing with difficult situations and standing up for what’s right in my community.  In my first year, I was only 14 years old and often I was either working alone or with one other umpire my own age.   I felt a lot of responsibility to make sure that the kids were having fun and were learning the rules of the game.  Parents and coaches did not make it easy.  Every game there would be times when parents and coaches were upset with the calls I made.  A few times I had coaches coming out of the dugout yelling at me.  It taught me to stand my ground.  It felt great to have parents come up to me after and thank me, saying how impressed they were that I kept my cool and did what’s right.

Most recently, I had a situation in a Robotics tournament that forced me to make a difficult decision.  In competitions, team scouts look for teams to play with in the elimination rounds.  Without my knowledge, members of our team convinced another school’s team to pick my robot to partner with even though they knew the robot had broken in the last round.  They knew that this would force the other team to lose the round and it would then help the other robots in our team move up the leaderboard.  When the other team announced they had chosen us, I had to walk up and decline it on the microphone it in front of everybody, which was very uncomfortable but important. I told my team that is just not the way we are going to compete, our reputation is as important as our results.