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Changing the World Right Next Door

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Changing the World Right Next Door



Courtesy Nicholas Gunn

▲ Nicholas Gunn visited area schools in his role as Mr. Benton Harbor.

During the past few years, as freshman Nicholas Gunn looked around his southwest Michigan community, his first response was to find ways to serve.

One initial opportunity came with Berrien Springs High School Afterschool Rocks, where Nicholas assisted senior citizens with yardwork and assembled care bags for those in need. He also stayed attuned to the role of God in his life, explaining, “I took it upon myself to strengthen my relationship with God by organizing an afterschool Bible study with over 100 students.” Together, those students volunteered and created important change in nearby Benton Harbor.

Later, Nicholas began work as a reporter/columnist/photographer for the *Benton Spirit Community Newspaper*. He trained to become a volunteer firefighter cadet in St.

Joseph, too. “Volunteering and helping my community as a first responder is very dear to my heart. Helping people who can’t help themselves in a time of need is something I love to do,” he expressed.

Nicholas also runs a YouTube channel and website to review businesses and educate area youth about local government. He co-chairs the Fresh Start Children’s Gardens in Benton Harbor and serves on several boards, including Spectrum Health Lakeland Community Advocates and the Steering Committee for the City of Benton Harbor Master Planning. Nicholas writes for *Moody on the Market* with Midwest Family and is the community and media engagement ambassador for Benton Harbor Team Solutions, which assists local residents in coping with lead contamination in their water.

In recognition for his passionate community involvement, Nicholas was crowned Mr. Benton Harbor 2022 and included in this year’s *Moody on the Market*’s “40 Under 40” award.

When Nicholas graduated from high school, he faced an unknown future. He found an opportunity to move forward at Andrews University through the Bridge to Success program, which provides additional mentoring for first-year students, and decided to attend. He ultimately declined the financial aid loans, however, to avoid debt. He recalled, “I had no idea how I could possibly pay for college, but I knew, deep down inside, that God would make a way, even though it seemed to me there were no other options. I prayed and prayed . . . for some type of miracle.”

He met Bridge to Success director Randy Graves, who refused to give up. Sensing something special in Nicholas, Graves submitted his Bridge to Success application essay to the University’s George Floyd Scholar program, which supports students who seek to actively create positive change in their communities. In July 2022, Nicholas received the news that he had been awarded the full tuition scholarship. “I was completely shocked,” he conveys, “but I am extremely happy to see what God has in store for me here at Andrews University.”

Currently, Nicholas is pursuing a degree in social studies and secondary education for teaching in high school. He looks forward to impacting and serving his new communities in the future, affirming, “I would like to continue to be a leader in and out of school while I study at Andrews.” ■

Isabella Koh, University Communication student writer