

# Thomas Patchan

Practice **CIVILITY** (March 16, 2012)

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There is a common expression we use when talking about empathy and respecting another's point of view: "put yourself in his shoes." Thomas Patchan once did exactly that. During resident advisor interviews, Thomas had finished his appointment when he saw another student wearing sneakers. The student asked Thomas if he could borrow his dress shoes. Thomas promptly took off his own shoes, gave them to the student, and then waited patiently as the student conducted his interview. Upon completion, the student gave Thomas his shoes back, said thank you, and they parted ways. Thomas was actually "competing" against him for a spot as a resident advisor -- yet without a second thought he helped a fellow Hokie.

Thomas' actions are a great example of how the Division of Student Affairs would like to see students practice civility here at Virginia Tech and in the world beyond. For Thomas, there is always enough time to be of service to someone else. Whether it is helping a student with his homework or working with the developmentally disabled on a spring break service trip to Chicago, he makes an intentional effort to be available. "I will be there for my friends when they need me," he said, "even if it means giving up time on Facebook or YouTube. You can always make time for the important things in life."

A sophomore majoring in civil engineering with a minor in economics, Thomas is a dean's list student, a member of the W.E.L.L. substance-free living-learning community, and he plays trumpet with the Marching Virginians. He is active in the

Newman Community Catholic campus ministry and leads its weekly faith sharing; he has captained Relay for Life and intramural softball teams; and he is a sports correspondent for WUVT radio. When asked about his future plans, Thomas said he would like to do something he loves that also helps the community and improves daily lives. "You have to define success for yourself," he said. "Life is not about money or a job. It's about happiness. If you are fulfilled in your life, you are a success."

Thomas was selected Resident Advisor for Pritchard Hall next year, and is already thinking about the kind of activities that will help incoming freshman build community and unity, and get the most out of their Virginia Tech experience. For his willingness to make the time to be there for his fellow Hokies and for the care and respect he shows in his treatment of others, the Aspire! Award for civility is presented to Thomas Patchan.