

Tears streamed down my face as she grabbed my hand. “It’s okay not to be okay. We’re going to get you the help you need.” In that moment, I genuinely understood service. It isn’t always about grand gestures and public adoration—it’s about showing up when you’re busy, offering comfort when things are hard, and making sure the people you love never feel alone. At Sam Houston State University, we often see the words “The measure of a Life is its Service” plastered on signs and walls, but on that day in September 2022, I finally felt what they meant.

Cooper was the one who sat beside me the day I attempted suicide, her steady presence reminding me that I wasn’t alone. Her schedule was packed, but she made room for me when I told her I needed to talk. The moment the words came out of my mouth— “Cooper...I don’t think I can do this anymore”—she cleared everything from her day and focused solely on my well-being. She took me out for ice cream, turned on my favorite movie, and let me break down in her arms, offering a quiet comfort that spoke louder than words ever could.

Cooper didn’t just sit beside me that day—she was dedicated to making me feel seen and heard. As I struggled to find the words to describe how I was feeling, she listened patiently, never rushing me or offering me empty words. Indeed, her presence was a promise that she wouldn’t leave me to go through this alone. When I did speak, she didn’t try to offer solutions to fix everything. Rather, she validated how I was feeling and reminded me that it was okay not to have all the answers. Her calm, unwavering words circled in my head as she allowed me the space to be vulnerable and broken; in doing this, she helped me find the strength to keep going. As I sat there with her, I realized that service isn’t always incredibly dramatic—it’s woven into our daily lives, in the quiet moments when we put others before ourselves. So

Cooper is currently spending her life dedicated to serving others through the role of a campus pastor of the Chi Alpha at New Mexico Highlands University. Although we have

physically gone our separate ways, I will never forget the impact she had on my life. Her quiet, consistent service to our community—whether in crisis or everyday life—showed me that the measure of a life truly does lie in the way we show up for others. Cooper's service has become a cornerstone in how I define a life well-lived. It's inspired me to embrace service not just as an ideal, but as a daily practice, grounded in showing up when others need it most. It's a lesson that continues to guide me, reminding me that service is not just an action. It's a way of living.