My action plan addresses the issue of economic disparity and access to the arts, specifically ballet, in the city of Buffalo. Many economically disadvantaged children in the city of Buffalo are not able to experience ballet, an opportunity usually beyond their reach economically and socially. Ballerinas for Buffalo targets one barrier for these children, the affordability of dance apparel. Buffalo Inner City Ballet, which was established in 1972, was created to provide minority and disadvantaged children of Western New York the opportunity to train in classical dance. Children with little or no exposure to the arts have had the opportunity to learn to dance, develop their artistic and physical abilities, and display their achievement to a Western New York audience, all in a positive and nurturing environment. "Bringing classical dance to minority and disadvantaged children in Western New York has been our mission for over 30 years," said Marvin Askew, Executive Director of Buffalo Inner City Ballet. "Too often, children raised in the poorest neighborhoods never have an opportunity to be exposed to the arts, let alone the opportunity to develop their own artistic abilities."

After visiting Buffalo Inner City Ballet with my mother during volunteer work, it was obvious to me that the students there were in need of dance apparel that was not tattered and worn. From this experience, I created Ballerinas for Buffalo, knowing that many of my fellow dancers would be able to help me achieve my goals for this community service project.

I have achieved and surpassed many goals I developed when I first started my action plan as a result of my two weeks at Brown University this past summer. I started a donation of ballet apparel in my dance studio to donate to Buffalo Inner-city Ballet. I set up a bin in my dance studio and posted flyers for further donations of new or gently used dance apparel for dancers ages 3 to 18. When I first set my goals, I hoped to have donated over 100 items by the summer of 2010. But, I have already donated over 150 apparel items and will continue to collect and deliver donations quarterly. Now that I have surpassed my initial goals, I have set new goals. I hope to donate an additional 50 items by this
summer, bringing my total to over 200 items.

I have learned many things from this project and I feel that I have grown as a person. First, I have become more giving and feel joy when giving back to my community, inspiring me to volunteer more in my community. Furthermore, I have gained more responsibility as I have taken on the responsibility of collecting the leotards and transporting them to the studio, which is 30 minutes from my home. Finally, I have seen how I can make a direct impact in my community by using my resources and my creativity wisely. I hope to continue my relationship with Buffalo Inner-city Ballet for years to come.