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HLTH 1110 Social Health & Diversity

Personal Reflection Paper

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Service at the Tenth East Senior Center

Today I finished my 10 hours of service with the elderly population. I have gone down to the Tenth East Senior Center to volunteer three times in November. I was extremely impressed by the Senior Center. The difference between the Senior Center and a Nursing Home is that the Senior Center is open to anyone over 65. The Center being open to the public makes a diverse group at the Senior Center. I spoke with seniors who were homeless, seniors with disabilities, seniors who's spouses had passed, and seniors who were financial secure. Many come to the Senior Center to get an affordable meal, or to have somewhere to rest during the day but some come for the social aspect of meeting and spending time with the other seniors.

The Senior Center has activities planned regularly. Every Wednesday morning they have a dance with live music by a group of elderly men who play jazz, swing, and samba music. I was amazed by the unity I saw amongst the elderly population. Many were dancing, and many were just sitting and socializing. The first day I went I spoke with a woman who was 93. She had lost most of her vision and her hearing, but she was folding the napkins with silverware for everyone's lunch. I asked if she wanted help, she did not want help because she says it keeps her busy. She was very kind and told me about her family, and that she was born in Salt Lake City.

She described Salt Lake as a very different place than it is now. It was interesting to hear someone speak about the changes she has witnessed. I had thought of those things but it was extremely rewarding to hear someone's perspective who had been around four times longer than I have. This woman I spoke with was wonderful.

What was challenging was that not everyone was as open to talking to me as she was. The second time I went in I had a hard time finding people who were receptive to socializing with me. I went to the volunteer coordinator and asked her what else could be done. I organized a big closet full of dry storage food. It was a mess, and had things misplaced and unorganized. I had to clear the shelves and then put the items back in a more organized fashion. I did this in about an hour. I realize however, that for someone who is elderly this could have taken more time or been more challenging. I also raked the leaves for the Senior Center. I put the leaves on their tulip bulbs for fertilizer. I swept the sidewalks, they were concerned that someone could slip on leaves, especially once it starts snowing. That is something I would have never thought of, but when you are in a walker or have a cane, that could be a bad problem. I hope that small acts like these really do help. It was satisfying to do work that would benefit the elderly.

I really enjoyed being around the elderly people at the Senior Center. It is an entirely different perspective on life that I get from them. Many of these people have lost spouses, or children live far away, but they do take care of each other and treat each other like family. I even saw a woman who was packing up a meal for a man who she said was single and who's wife had passed earlier this year. The way they took care of each other was very impressive to me. They are all in a chapter of life that presents different challenges, and because of that I feel like they

take care of each other. I think that small service like this does impact the community. When I raked the leaves I felt like I was doing something for the seniors that would have been more challenging for many of them to do. It effected me individually by seeing a different perspective and different part of life. The elderly has more of an idea of what is most important, their families and the happiness in life.