

Student Success Fall 07 Service Learning Stories

What volunteering taught me

One year ago I left my home and decided to leave my family, friends, job and car. It was a tough decision; I don't think I would do it again. A year later I feel so much different and have grown a lot. It is not easy to learn a new language after having spoken one for 25 years.

Once I started to do volunteer work it was new experience for me. Years ago, I did work back in my native country of El Salvador for poor people who didn't have a house and who lost everything due to the earthquake. Here in the USA it was different, I had to leave the fear of speaking and not feel bad if I made a mistake. This was a challenge for me and something I learned everyday.

Karen V. Spring 07

Last term was my first time as a student in Los Angeles City College and my first speech class. Once the teacher told us about the volunteer work we would have to do I had no idea about what she was talking about. I thought of all my excuses: I have a baby, I am a wife, and there's no way I can do it. Next class, half of the student left. I stuck it out!

I got to work in Adult Day Care center. Once I saw the happy smiling faces my scared and nervous feelings left me. The people were so friendly, we had nice conversations, the time just flew by. I never could have foreseen that before. One day, I even got to dance with an 89 women. It was so much fun. My last day, I brought a cake with me to enjoy with my new friends. I felt sadness inside me and I am sure they were too.

Hayarpi B. Spring 07

In my experience doing volunteer work requires you giving all of yourself to helping other people. Once you assist others, it makes you feel good about yourself. I got to work with seniors and one day I had a special idea but initially the coordinator didn't think it was such a great plan. I am glad persisted as my goal was to cut hair, do hair styles, and manicures too. I wish you could have seen their faces when I finished their hair and now. I also found to give them a kiss or hug was probably more important than any pill.

Martha B. Spring. 07

I came here not feeling comfortable speaking English. I was especially lucky the teacher helped me find volunteer work with the Theatre Academy. There, I made new friend, learned different vocabulary about the theatre and shows. My job was working as an usher where I would welcome the guest, hand them the program tear the ticket and answer any questions. It was an unforgettable experience doing this while also learning English.

Francisco G. Spring 07

Today this Sunday it is a cold day. Our menu at the Mission is broiled eggs with bacon. It smells very good. I have three volunteer partners from So. Pasadena. They are teenagers, two girls and one boy. They were born in America, but their ancestors come from different places. Loren was born in So. Pasadena, but her mom is half Mexican. Her father is German-American. She grew up in America because her parents are third generation. Loren has to do a school project where she does 30 hours in Union Rescue Mission. Kaitlin is doing the same project and unfamiliar with her parents culture. Yet her parents came from Japan. She only knows the culture, the food, and Japanese New Year. Kenneth Kuo was born in LA and speaks Mandarin and English. He grew up in his parent's culture. He respects the older people because they are wise. He is not sociable and it is hard for him to speak with strangers as that is his tradition.

Robert P. Spring 07