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**Service Learning Reflective Essay**

Throughout this academic year, service learning hasn’t only been about helping people or earning credit, but actually a learning experience. I have learnt countless important things from this program that no classroom could teach me. I’ve learnt skills on how to communicate with children who are sick. I’ve also obtained practical skills such as planting a garden or assembling a bed. But regardless of these things, I learnt what it means to help someone and what it really means to put a smile on their face. Yes, I have done nice gestures for people that have made them happy but when you see a huge smile forming on a sick child’s face who has gone through such a rough time and hear their joyous laughter fill the room, you get a feeling that cannot be explained. I honestly have never felt happier in my life until that day, the day when all the children’s faces lit up when I walked into the room. Community service is so much more than giving donations or doing things for the children, it’s about having the will and happiness to donate your time and spend it with these needy children. Because I can honestly say, they feel it when you want to be there because you care about them rather than when you’re just there because you have to be there. This really affects them emotionally because they have had an extremely rough childhood that no kid deserves to have. While working in the Health and Hope Oasis, I developed problem solving and decision making skills that I could use in the future. We didn’t really have many problems or issues but I felt like I could handle them in an intelligent and effective manner if there were any. I can truthfully and proudly say that I have changed, in a good way after I was exposed to the children, worked with them and participated in making the facility suitable for living and also in making it a happier and child friendly environment. I became more open minded on what it means to help someone in need, on

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what it means to donate my time to the less privileged, and I have learnt so much from the kids themselves. Although the project that I took part in only helped a portion of all the children infected with Cancer, I felt that I was giving back to my society and especially my country, Egypt. Egypt is my home; it is my life, and my mother. It has provided me with everything I need and I owe Egypt that much, to help some of the less privileged people in the country. The only challenge we came across was the distance of the facility, but here’s where our newly attained skills came in handy. We decided to still help and support the organization by doing activities and things that they needed in locations in Cairo. After all the hard work and perseverance, I can honestly say that we made a huge difference at the site. After going there twice and helping out many times in various locations around Cairo, we did make a difference, not only a physical one but an emotional one as well in the minds of the children. We succeeded in achieving our goal of making the facility a more child friendly environment which made me very glad and happy that I did something special for these kids. In terms of making a physical difference, we made the Health and Hope Oasis a happier place to be in by planting patches of grass and gardens throughout the project, we drew and painted door numbers for each unit, and assembled more than forty beds in the units. This made a difference to the kids, their families and the members of the organization because they thanked us profusely for donating and spending our time there. We also made an emotional difference in the children. Whenever we were there, whether playing with them, talking to them, or cleaning up after them, I always felt that they were happier because they had a radiant glow on their faces and were always smiling no matter what. I think it was because for them to know that people like us, young people, not their parents care deeply about them and are willing to spend large amounts of time playing

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with them and putting up with their tantrums at times really made a huge difference to them. It also made a huge difference to me as well, the amount of happiness I felt when one of them would come up to me and ask me to play with them or when one would ask for help was indescribable. I really cannot explain the enormous amount of joyfulness and contentment that I felt when I knew that I had the power to help these kids and make them smile.

One of the greatest things in life, is when you make someone happy, no matter where or what the situation is. Overall, I think we did a great job at improving the state of the facility and making it more suitable for sick children to come and live in and more importantly, to come and have fun. Also, I couldn’t have done any of it without my friends, Lily and Jasmen. They were always helping and were motivated and determined to make a difference. They have always been there for me and I cannot thank them enough for helping me through Service Learning this year.

In Egypt, there are thousands of poor children that are infected with Cancer and don’t have the opportunity of getting good medical care or even the ability to go to the Health and Hope Oasis and be happy and carefree for once. Poverty is quite a large issue in Egypt, and it affects some communities and societies severely. I was blessed by God to have been born into a well off family who can provide for me, send me to one of the best schools in Cairo, and buy me whatever I need. But there are many children out there who weren’t as lucky and don’t have this luxury. So as a privileged person, it is my job to help the less privileged because that’s how it works in life, the rich or well off always help the poor because they weren’t lucky and weren’t born into a happy and loving environment. As I mentioned above,

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throughout this year, I have learnt countless lessons and things but the most important thing I learnt was to always be appreciative and thankful of what I have, and honestly, I think that’s what service is all about, in addition to many other things as well. Seeing those kids, and seeing the poverty and sad environment that they live in pained me, I never imagined that poverty could be that bad. No child, let alone human deserves to live like this, but unfortunately that’s just the way life is and we can’t change it. But there is one thing we can do, and that is to help them and give back. Kids like us, we get presents and nice things but most of all, we get unconditional love from our families. Children around the world don’t have any of this and while we’re opening the tons of presents that we receive on our birthdays, they’re roaming the streets barefoot searching for food.

From now on, even outside of the class in school, I will take it upon myself to help poor and needy children around me because they deserve care and love and they deserve time and attention. So let’s make the world about them for once and not about us.