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Leadership ISU

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Service Project Experience

For my service project experience, I planned on doing something with Habitat for Humanity. Since I was part of the club, it was relatively easy to find something to do. Conveniently, there was a build day the same week that this service project was assigned. I signed up for it, but wasn’t able to get the sheet signed off before I went. Nonetheless, I still went to the build day, but I didn’t get credit for Leadership ISU.

I then looked around for another service opportunity that I could use to fulfill this requirement. Realizing that I was running out of time to choose another project, I sent several e-mails to organizers of various events, hoping at least one of them would respond in time. Luckily, three of them did, but in my rush to find an opportunity, I didn’t see that one of the projects took place far away from campus, outside of the busing routes. I reluctantly had to rescind my offer of volunteerism because I didn’t have any means of getting there. I felt awful about that, since she seemed so pleased to have help.

Anyway, I finally settled on CyServe for my project. I worked with Habitat for Humanity, which is part of the reason why I chose CyServe. It was a nice Saturday, and I took the bus down to McDonald Street to help with the build. Along with some girls, I helped an old man named Ted construct the back deck of the house. I taught one of the girls how to use a router bit on a drill while others cut the lumber for the deck. After I bolted the side boards onto the deck, there wasn’t a whole lot left to do since all of the girls were already working on drilling screws into the deck. So I just helped out with anything that was needed, such as running the batteries back inside to charge, or helping to cut more lumber to the right size. I worked until about noon, then the Habitat people working there ended up taking me back to Friley where I slept off the effects of the Freshman Honors Retreat the night before.

As for what I did, I helped build a house. The group of us workers built a house. However, we did more than just build a building with four walls, a roof, and a basement. We built a home. This home will go to some deserving person in need. Without it, they might’ve been sleeping outside, in a friend’s house, or anywhere they could catch a nap. These people or this person who will live in this house will have something that they can call “home”. Having a home just makes them feel secure, makes them feel safe. A home is a place that provides refuge from whatever might ail them.

I expected most of what I did, since I was working with Habitat for Humanity and I had worked with them before. I wasn’t shocked or surprised by anything I did there or who I met. I came prepared to work hard and to build things, and that’s exactly what I did.

The most challenging part of my service was to be patient. The girl I was working with, Tiffany, didn’t know a whole lot about tools. She didn’t know what a bolt, nut, or washer was called and she wasn’t sure how to reverse the rotation of the drill. I had to force myself to be patient with her, to show her how to do things without doing it myself. I made polite suggestions and only took the drill from her when she really didn’t understand. Patience is truly a virtue, and I hope I displayed that that day.

I learned that I’m a person who truly values working with your hands and getting dirty. I’m sure I smiled several times that day because I was working outside; I was working hard. In other service projects I’ve done where we’ve packaged meals or opened cans of corn and beans (Yes I did this once), I just haven’t had the same satisfaction as actually being outside, possibly sweating. Looking back over the job I accomplish, and actually being able to **see** those accomplishments is what really drives me.

In Leadership ISU, we’ve been studying the different faucets of leadership and what all comes into making a leader successful. In the type of service project I did, cooperation is key. If people don’t cooperate, the house won’t ever get built. Trying to put up a wall by yourself would be extremely tough, and if it was able to be done, the wall would be sloppy and misshapen. Others aspects that I learned about in class aren’t as important as cooperation in a setting such as this. As a leader, one has to direct people, but also know how to follow so they can cooperate with everyone working on the project.

The real issue behind Habitat for Humanity is that there isn’t much affordable housing in America. The housing that is affordable isn’t really suitable for living in either. With the help of major contractors, the cost of housing can be lowered enough so that anyone can afford to have a home without having to worry too much about their financial situation.

Overall, this project was fun, motivating, and beneficial to the Ames community. Someone deserving will get this home, and that makes me feel happy. Happy that I served.