

Alexis Ribakoff

Jody Brown

IES-103

12th October 2017

Fieldwork # 2

On Friday October 6th, I went to Mary's Kitchen for a few hours along with Nicole Howard, Maddie Shack, and Zoey Pittler. We were there for a total of 2 hours. We got there when they were finishing up serving lunch to the homeless people. As a result, we did not get to directly serve the people there, instead, our jobs was to clean up from the lunch hour and see how the organization runs overall. With that said, we did get to meet some of the homeless people there, we were just not able to directly serve them food. When we got there, we met up with professor Brown who is the kitchen captain on fridays. She gave us a tour of the grounds and showed us all the amazing things Mary's Kitchen has to offer. Luckily, my group and I got to interview two volunteers whom had been working there for many years. Barbara and Sally are long time volunteers at Mary's Kitchen. Sally told us that she had been there from basically the beginning and she keeps coming back because it is worth all the work to know she's making a difference. After this, we were put to work in the kitchen to either sweep the floors, fold laundry, wash dishes and to overall just tidy up the kitchen.

When I first got there, professor Brown gave us a tour of all the different sheds at Mary's Kitchen. There were different sheds that were dedicated to storing different things that they would give out to the homeless people. For example, there were sheds dedicated to clothes that people donated, for food for their animals, for toiletries, and another for all the dry food that

surrounding markets have donated. It was really nice to see how much the people of the Orange care about helping and giving back to the homeless. Many donate their clothes and go out and buy food in order for these people to have the things that they need. Likewise, all the people who were serving the food, were extremely gracious and willing to give whatever was needed to the homeless. In addition, they seemed enthused and happy knowing that they are helping. I noticed that the relationships between some of the homeless and the helpers was as if they were life long friends. Some of the people who work at Mary's Kitchen have been doing it for years, therefore, they had the ability to form personal relationships with the people whom they are helping. I thought this was very important because it makes the homeless feel as though they are there to do more than just eat.

Overall, I think going to Mary's Kitchen was a positive experience. Feeding the homeless is not something that is new to me. I used to go to the Union Rescue Mission in downtown LA when I was in high school. I think that when you go to places like Mary's Kitchen and the Union Rescue Mission, you are doing more than just serving food, you are making a difference in their lives. You really get to know the people you are serving food just by one having even a tiny conversation when serving them. Although I did not get to directly serve food that day, I know that feeling of reward you get after doing it so, I would definitely want to go back another time and be able to serve. I think the whole process of making the food, serving it, and then cleaning it up after is a wonderful way to connect to people you wouldn't have otherwise.

When I was being given a tour around Mary's Kitchen, professor Brown told us that some of the volunteers are even homeless themselves. I thought this was quite surprising because I did not expect that the homeless people would want to get involved that much. Things like that,

just really go to show how important places like Mary's Kitchen are. Mary's Kitchen does not just give people food, it provides them with opportunities to give back and help in the same way that they might have been helped. It allows them to better themselves even more by doing the things that helped them. In addition, it makes the people feel like they are more than just a homeless person who needs food. For the people who work there, it makes them feel as if have a place and purpose in the grand scheme of Mary Kitchen. Although surprising at first, I think that giving jobs to some of the homeless people is a really good idea and way to keep them coming back and to feel like they mean something to the organization.

From going to Mary's Kitchen, I learned that anyone can come and help and make a difference. People from all walks of life come and volunteer at Mary's Kitchen. For example, when we went, the volunteers ranged from older ladies to young men to Mormon kids from a mission near by and then us. It's amazing to me that people who could not be more different are able to come together and find a common ground by helping the people of this community. I also learned that you do not need to end world hunger in order to make a difference. It's about the little things; just by feeding someone you are changing their life in that moment and just by changing one person's life every time you go to Mary's Kitchen, you are a part of a chain reaction that leads to a greater outcome.

When it comes to myself, I learned that I really enjoy helping other people in the smallest of ways. I am a firm believer that actions speak louder than words. You can say that you are want to help the homeless people but, until you actually go and help them, your words have empty meaning. Moreover, I am also a firm believer in the idea that it's not about quantity it's about quality. You do not have to try to end hunger in order to make a difference, all you need to do is

do your part by trying change as many lives as you can, one step at a time. Taking the time to get to know someone speaks more volume because it's little things like that that brighten up a person's day. I learned that I truly value those little moments and that I rather engage thoroughly with one or two people as opposed to just vaguely getting to know a lot of people and getting to know them only on the surface.

I think after going to Mary's Kitchen, everyone in my group wanted to come back and do more for the organization. I think that after hearing about the man whose son wrote a letter to the lady in charge, we all felt really touched and felt like Mary's Kitchen is an important place that we need to come back to. The woman in charge was telling us about this man who came in one day but, was drunk and was told to come back the next and never ended up coming back because he died. While she was telling us this story and then read the letter from his son that basically explained the whole point of Mary's Kitchen, I could see that one of my groupmates was tearing up a little bit. Furthermore, I could see how much this touched her and how much this place meant to her even after just one visit there. I was nice to see how moved my group member was and how after just one visit, she was excited to come back again.

After looking at all our past readings, it is clear that the main topic that had to do with this Fieldwork project was the topic of conscious service. When it comes to conscious service, we need to be fully engaged in what is going on and with the person we're helping. We cannot just focus on our our own lives for that time. Additionally, we cannot let whatever we are afraid of or whatever we are thinking about get in the way of truly helping the other person. For example, Dass and Gorman explain, "Can we we see that to be of most service to others we must face our own doubts, needs and resistances" (p.15). When I went to Mary's Kitchen, we had to

give our full attention to the tasks at hand. Even if we were hesitant to talk to the homeless people or to even clean out the sink drain, it was not about us and our needs, it was about the needs of the organization and the needs of the individuals the organization set out to help. In order to fully help the people at hand, we might have to face what we are uncomfortable with head on and deal with it because if we do not, we are not truly being of service.

Another quote from Dass and Gorman that connects to the idea of conscious service is, “The reward, the real grace, of conscious service, then, is the opportunity not only to help relieve suffering but to grow in wisdom, experience greater unity, and have a good time while doing it” (p.16). I truly believe that this quote encapsulates the whole mantra of Mary's Kitchen. When going to Mary's Kitchen, you are there to not only consciously serve the community but to also meet people you would never have before and bond over this act of service while also having a good time talking and getting to know everyone you are surrounded with. A couple of the people I talked to said that they do not just keep coming because giving back is the right thing to do, they keep coming back because they have created a bond with the people who also volunteer there as well as with the people they are helping. Everyone who is apart of Mary's Kitchen is able to come together and create something that not only helps the less fortunate but, also opens their horizons to new things and allows them to find common ground in the act of service.