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EDGE 4010

Final Reflections

While growing up in Cedar City I have always admired how amazing the programs and faculty are at Southern Utah University. They provide such a great learning atmosphere and sincerely care about your college experience, and where that education will take you afterwards. Following my acceptance to SUU and beginning classes, I soon found out that I would need to complete an EDGE project as part of my education at SUU. Honestly, I wasn't very excited for these additional required classes that seemingly only added more work and prevented me from finishing school faster. But as I continued my education I soon realized that SUU is trying to set their students apart and bring them up to a higher level by incorporating EDGE projects as part of their curriculum.

As I began to brainstorm ideas for my EDGE project I soon realized that there is a very big need of service right here within our communities. I originally wanted to do a service project in some foreign land, but there are so many people right here in our own state, county, and even city that need our help. This is when I realized that most people don't recognize the needs of their own community members. I wanted to raise an awareness for the needs of the members in my community, so I began to look around for service opportunities. In my search for service opportunities I talked with some of the advisors for the Rural Health Scholars club.

The Rural Health Scholars organization is a medical centered program for students from a rural background. They assist student in educating them and helping them fulfill the

prerequisites for several different medical programs. Most medical programs require a certain amount of service hours in order to apply for their program, so RHS (Rural Health Scholars) sponsors several different service trips to help students fulfil these requirements. Upon talking with the advisors of this program, I found out that they wished to start a service trip right here in the capitol of our state, Salt Lake City. These advisors were kind enough to let me and two other students organize this trip as a experimental service trip for RHS.

The two other students and I got to work immediately. We called dozens of organizations up in Salt Lake asking if we could provide some sort of community service for them. As we sorted through these organizations I made sure to focus on those activities that would help the volunteers see the needs of the people in our community. Some of these activities included volunteering at homeless shelters, preparing food and supplies for the less fortunate, playing games with children at the hospital, and organizing donated medical supplies. Once we figured out which organizations we were able to provide service for, we organized a timeline of the activities that we would be doing. Through the Rural Health Scholars, we were able to find volunteers that could attend this trip and that were willing to help pay for food, room, and travel. We then met as a trip group and completed all of the legal documents and prerequisites for the trip.

Once spring break arrived, all of our volunteers met in Cedar City where we carpooled up to Salt Lake City. We stayed in Salt Lake for five days, during this time we volunteered at many organizations, toured several healthcare facilities, and had a little bit of fun in downtown Salt Lake. Everyone had a great time while serving and learning more about the needs of this community. I think the service that we provided helped the volunteers recognize how many

people stand in need of our help on a day to day basis. Some needs are very visible, such as the needs for a homeless person, however, other needs are not so apparent. Seemingly ordinary people have very personal and essential needs as well. We discovered some of these needs while conversing with students who were learning English in an adult high school. The majority of these student come from very difficult backgrounds and were forced to leave their families in their native countries hoping that they could one day earn enough money to afford the travel fare for their family. These were very tender and personal moments that no one will ever forget.

This trip not only opened the eyes of the volunteers to the needs of people all around them, but it also helped me grow in many different ways as well. I usually tend to be a follower in the group, but one cannot be a leader and a follower at the same time. This trip helped get me out of my comfort zone and take charge of projects, helping the volunteers with their needs. It also helped me develop and increase by organizational skills. I never realized how much effort and careful planning goes into making a trip, like this one, run smooth the entire time. One must be very flexible and always have a back up plan. I am so glad that I had this opportunity to be involved in a service trip that blessed the lives of so many people. There are few better feelings in the world than the one that you receive after serving someone in need.