On Friday, March 16, 2012 we went to volunteer at SOS Community Services with our classmates and our teacher Dinah. There were about 20 students and the GA. Dr. Perren also showed up that day. SOS is an organization that was started by EMU students in the 1970s. It is a center where they received calls from people who have problems. SOS activities have expanded to include helping homeless people who are in need of finding shelter. They shelter approximately 60 families with 100 children per year.

After we arrived there we were divided into three groups and work at three different locations around Ypsilanti. The first team worked fixing a garden at one of the SOS locations. The second team went to work at the day care center playground. The third team worked on publicizing the organization and events. The teacher Dinah and one group worked in the garden cleaning group at the SOS main location. The second group went with Dr. James. The day care provided brooms and cleaning products to clean the playground and to collect leaves. They then put them into bags that were provided.

The group was split into several groups to perform the different tasks. Group 1 was sweeping the grounds and also cleaning the tables and chairs. Group 2 was collecting the leaves and cleaning the toys for kids in the playground. The third group worked on distributing flyers. They posted flyers about the organization’s activities at shops and restaurants in the Depot Town area after asking for permission from the shop owners. It’s named Depot Town because it’s the place where the train stopped 50 years ago when the train was very popular. They entered every shop in that area and asked for permission to post the flyers. It was surprising that most of the people know and support the SOS organization. They welcomed the students and some of them offered to post the flyer by themselves.
First Stop: Ypsilanti ReSale Shop

By: Harrison Dampeyrou & One Anonymous Class Author

The Ypsilanti Re-Sale Shop is a nonprofit shop. They collect furniture, clothing, electrical appliances and all the requirements for daily life which they sell at very low prices to people in poor living conditions. The profit they make by selling those secondhand products is given to high school students in Ypsilanti. In other words, they raise money for student scholarships. The people who work at the shop do many things to organize their procedures. The things they sell come from two sources: either they ask people to donate things or sometimes the people come to them to donate things by themselves.

The day that we went to this location we had more than 20 students together. We were split up into several groups each having a different function. One of our groups was in the clothes section and another was in the pants section. We talked about how to organize the boxes and what we must write to label them correctly. We decided to make steps for the process and sections in the warehouse for all the boxes. We did our work really fast. After that our group did our job perfectly and easily. We think every group organized themselves more or less in the same way; the group as a whole did a really good job.

In our opinion, these people are amazing to do all this work and for such wonderful reasons. This work is humanitarian and helps build people’s morale. They make happy families and kids. When we saw the people we wondered how much time they spend at this work and if they had another job making money in order to make a living. This enabled us to make something useful for society, but at the same time useful for us. Being in groups with students from different nationalities also helps us to practice speaking in English.

“The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others”

Ghandi
Next Stop: Habitat for Humanity ReStore  By: Stephanie Liu & Minji Jang

This is the second time to do volunteer work in this class. It was February 10, 2012. We went to the Habitat for Humanity Restore in Ann Arbor. The volunteer coordinator, Alana, told us the store was a nonprofit, volunteer-driven organization that works to provide affordable homeownership opportunities for hard-working and deserving families. Moreover, they use the money they earn from selling their products to help others. Whatever they are doing, it’s all helping people who need our help. At the same time, we had been thinking that we wanted to be part of a group to help people who need help.

We can also build houses for other people with the same organization. At this location, Minji was asked to remove dust from the floor. She felt that her work was fruitful during this time because the products looked more clean after she finished cleaning them. Stephanie had to organize several areas, and she used detergent to clean everything such as several appliances. She realized that even though sinks and toilets have different shapes and they are really heavy, she still needed other people to help her. This task called for teamwork. Dr. Perren’s assistant checked whether we spoke English or not; she emphasized that we needed to speak English. We also agreed that it’s the most important thing to do during the volunteer work, so we tried to use English as much as we could. Although we were exhausted after all the work, we learned a lot from different people. We looked forward to the next activity!

“There is no better exercise for your heart, than reaching down and helping to lift someone up.”

Bernard Meltzer

Habitat for Humanity: What Will You Build?

By: Khowther Alrashed, Entsar Alqamar, & Yibo Chen

On April 6, 2012, we and our classmates volunteered during spring recess. We went to Ypsilanti for a Habitat for Humanity construction day. The work time was from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and two of us worked until noon. One of us stayed the whole day! The house was almost done and there was a leader who led the volunteers. He separated our work into different assignments at different locations in the house. Yibo arranged shelves inside the closet in several rooms. Furthermore, she and Mike built the shelves together. When they did the first shelf it was difficult to arrange it correctly at first. After they finished the first one, they were able to learn how to arrange the next one. By doing this job, they learned a lot of skills about completing this activity. Khowther had to paint a closet corner after the instructor painted the closet in one room. After that she went upstairs and worked with Entsar who was painting some of the doors in two different bedrooms. We went downstairs because the House Leader, Paul, asked us to cover the floor. Paul wanted us to move some stuff out of another room, and they did not want to break or damage the floor. Our clothes, hands and boots were covered in paint, but we enjoyed the painting. We were even proud of every piece of our dirty clothes because it was for helping other people.
Beautiful Gallup Park

By: Liren Dai, Aziz Almotawez, & Monir Almotairy

On April 13 we went to Gallup Park to do a volunteering job as part of the community class. We went there with our classmates and professors, Dr. James and Dinah. Once we arrived there we were introduced by Brad Kraft, a volunteer coordinator from Give 365, an NPO. After that we were divided into groups by our classmate, Entsar. Our task was painting the picnic tables in the park; we really learned how to paint! In short, our feelings about that work are that we were so excited to do it and we learned new things. For example, we learned that with cooperation we can make things better and we can make people happy.

Fuller Park in A2 By: Shada Alaqei & Arwa Alaqeel

On Friday, March 23, we went with Professor Dinah to Fuller Park in Ann Arbor. That’s where we met Brad, the volunteer coordinator who works for the Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Center. We were divided into three groups; each group had a specific tasks to do. One task was to paint, another was to sweep, and the third task was to pick up garbage. Shada worked with the third group and tried to help by making the park ready for the spring season. Her job was to pick up the garbage by using the “garbage picker upper.” That experience gave her a sense of satisfaction that they were helping to have picnics and rest. Arwa said that we prepared the place for visitors so that they will spend a good time at a nice place.

On that day the weather was amazing although it was expected to rain. Thankfully we finished our task before it started to rain. We were working together and no one felt tired because of the amazing place that we were working at. Since it was an open space we were able to see each other. Seeing the others working helped us to continue working too.

As usual, we learned new English words on that particular day. Whatchamacallit, garbage picker upper, foreign, and pop top. The most interesting thing that one of us found was a nice quote that the graduate assistant told us about, “never say that I am sad because the rose has thorns, but say I am happy that the thorns have a rose.”

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