



1 I have been looking forward to taking this class since before my freshman year. My dad and I were at one of the informational sessions on high school scheduling during 8th grade when Mrs. Reigert briefly mentioned the program. "It's a service oriented class where you get a social studies, English, and community service credit. You serve at an organization throughout the year and have the possibility of going on numerous service trips, but you have to be senior to take it." My dad looked at me and said, "That's got your name all over it."

2 I've always been involved in the school and I've tried to always do "the right thing." I volunteered for the Safety Town Program and the Perry Fall Festival, through Key Club and family connections, but I never realized how much service had an impact on my life until about a week ago.

3 Lisa Tenney and I were sitting in the internet café during 3rd block. We usually volunteer for Mr. Hruska as the band librarians during this time, but he didn't have anything for us to do and we saw Kenny working on his English project. He was reading Tuesdays With Morrie. Is there anyone in this room that didn't like this book? Kenny didn't. Lisa screamed at him when he said the book was hypocritical. I tried to dismiss his cruelty, but it upset me for the rest of the day. I couldn't understand how this one book had such an impact on me, but he hated it. We disagree on quite a bit of things, but this one was insulting. He claimed that the morals of the story were impossible to attain my any "normal" American citizen. ~~How could an adult with numerous bills to pay work at a job solely because they liked what they did, but did not benefit them financially? How could Morrie's circumstances be applied to anyone but his own?~~ I remember him saying, "He only knows the things he knows because he is 100% comfortable with death and has had an accomplished life. Who can relate to that?"

4 You can see why I got upset, but it wasn't until then that I realized how much this class has changed the way I think. Before this year, volunteering was a short activity that I did to put on a resume or because someone asked me to. After volunteering with the same group of people for an entire year, volunteering isn't an activity for me anymore. It's a duty. When my best friends hosted the Seniors Helping Seniors Prom, they never had to ask me to show. The children in Mrs. Laboe's room look forward to seeing Miss Rachel and me every other day. They rely on us. Even out of PSL, I volunteer to take my grandma, who lives alone, out grocery shopping every week. She may not take me up on the offer, but she knows that I'm always there for her. Over the past year, my mother lost her job at Sherwin Williams, went unemployed for a few months, and is now busting her butt at the Power Plant working 6 days a week, 12 hours a day. She hates it, but she can't quit. If it weren't for this class, I would have never learned how to deal with the pitfalls in life and I wouldn't have realized the independence needed to emotionally support two people.

5 I've had a lot of people thank me for "helping out" or "donating your time." Each time I stand in shock. I never considered helping a real option. A few seconds later, I'll muster up a "No problem" to fill the silence.

6 It's not that I feel obligated to serve because it's part of the class. I feel honored to be able to help others. After experiencing so much negativity and unhappiness from my parents' divorce 10 years ago, I vowed to live a life of happiness. As I explained in my Midterm Art Reflection Project, a smile is contagious. Happiness is a virus. What's the best way to spread a virus? ...Human interaction.

7 After a few weeks of volunteering in Mrs. Laboe's classroom, I began leading story time and story responses, where they express their thoughts and feelings about the book that we just read. I'd write everyone's name on the board, with enough space underneath for me to write their sentences. Joe was especially talkative that day, and he screamed "UH OH." Uh oh? What'd I do wrong? Cory whispered, "What the..." I ended up spelling Cory's name wrong. It wasn't a big deal, but knowing that they were comfortable in letting me know what I do wrong is probably what made my time in the classroom so successful. It's also the leading reason why I was able to learn so much from them.

8 Just last week when I was volunteering, we came rolling in the door, saw me, and immediately asked me if I would read the story today. By now, I've been reading almost every time, but having him ask me to do it shows how much they appreciate my presence. It's amazing how all the children pay attention when I read, but not as much when Mrs. Laboe reads. Then, as I was leaving to make a few copies, he asked me again if I would read News-2-You, our weekly newspaper. It made me laugh how cute he would say it, but I couldn't this time. He's known to throw some pretty wild "fits", but he was ok that time. I have yet to be the cause of anyone's unhappiness...I hope. But, just the way Joe looked at me and asked me to help gave me a sense of how much they appreciate me coming every week. Every day when I walk in, Quinn asks me "Hi Miss Alex, what color are you wearing today?" Haha. "I don't know Quinn, what color am I wearing today?" or he'll say, "Miss Alex, where are you going back to?" I'd ask him, "I don't know Quinn, where am I going?" ... "To the high school?" He is fascinated with the high school.

9 Perhaps the reason Kenny's statements about Tuesdays with Morrie upset me so much was because I knew he was being ignorant and I didn't know how to show him otherwise. Now, Kenny does a lot of community service himself, but he's looking at PSL from the outside in. I am looking from the inside out, just like all of the issues that we study. In class, we look at issues from the outside in, trying to make sense of the arguments and parameters of each societal issue, but when we volunteer - when we interact and learn from other people - we can learn firsthand. I can understand Special Education because I've learned and became a part of their environment. Volunteering is a way to connect to a group of people who can teach you about the world. The classroom is a way to study the world to understand a group of people. Perry Service Learning incorporates both. I wish Kenny could experience that.