**Blog**

I volunteer at Adult Day Services or ADS on a weekly basis in Wallis Hall. The group there consists of adults that need to be watched or have needs that families cannot provide for during workdays. While I am there they have, exercise, lunch, quiet time, and book club. I am there to set up lunch and really just hang out with the participants. Though a lot of the older participants have dementia or some deteriorative disease, they still enjoy reminiscing what they can and talking with the other volunteers about their lives.

A woman there was born with a mental handicap so though she is older, she has the mentality of a five of six-year-old. I came to help out with a bandage of gauze and medical tape on my hand because I couldn’t find one of the really big Band-Aids and because it looked so bad she was very, very concerned. She asked me what happened and I explained that I looked worst that it was and how I had fallen on a thorny plant that made my hand itchy. Still very worried, she pet my had a few times then kissed it a total of four times throughout the day.

I know this sounds bad but I had never been very comfortable around people with mental issues because I wasn’t sure how I was supposed to go about talking to them or acting the way I should. My lack of knowledge made me fearful of the unknown and discouraged me from working with that population. Though I am still not confident by any means, I hope to become so by continuing to work at ADS and interacting with the participants more.

**What?**

Adult Day Services, or ADS is a program that allows primary care givers to drop off their older loved ones that cannot be home alone for whatever reason and trust they are in a nurturing, safe, and productive environment. At ADS I usually come around lunch time so I help set that up while most of the participants exercise in another room. Setting everything up correctly is very important because; 1. All of the participants have to be seated in certain way so none of the ones that are prone to bickering fight with one another, and 2. To make sure everyone gets the food they are supposed to have. There are some diabetics and also some that are allergic to artificial sweeteners so it is crucial that everyone gets what they need. I don’t think I was expecting to enjoy the work it do at ADS as much as my past service experiences however, I think I can accurately say I enjoy it more.

**So What?**

I honestly don’t really know what I expected my work at ADS to be like. I think when I went in originally I was thinking more about fulfilling my service requirement than anything. If I did have any preconceptions of the work, they would probably be that I though that the participants would be worse off than most of them are. For the most part, these are actually higher functioning mentally disabled/ill adults. I love interacting with the participants however there is one aspect of volunteering at ADS I don’t like. There are a few employees that tend to “baby” the participants which we were specifically told not to do when we went through orientation. I now realize how important independence is to people especially when they have limited mobility. The participants are obvious about not liking her and a few of the volunteers talking down to them, usually with some eye rolling, but the workers tend to look past that and continue their behavior. This can hurt the morale of the participants and shows how society often sweeps the elderly or disabled population under the rug.

**Now What?**

Like I said before, I think it’s incredibly important for the people who are older or mentally ill to retain independence and feel as though they’re not just burdens or feel as though they can’t do anything themselves. I think the only thing to really address this issue is to better train health care workers and the volunteers at the facility. Though I don’t plan on going into the field of health care I am still happy for my experience with this program and these people. Better understanding all people is everyone’s business and something I will continue my whole life.