

A Semester of Volunteering

I remember the day during our first week of class, when we were informed about our semester long project of volunteering at a non-profit organization. When Dan and Tracy introduced us to the four different organizations that needed our help, my last choice was Operation Iraqi Children (OIC). Looking back, this prejudgment I had seems a little ironic now. The organization I have actually volunteered at over the last four months and found a deep appreciation for just so happens to be Operation Iraqi Children. For whatever reason, OIC seemed the least interesting to me. The first impression I had of the organization, was that it wasn't going to make enough of a difference with the plans I had in mind. I felt that if I was going to be spending an entire semester volunteering at an organization, I wanted it to be something big. I wanted to fulfill my dreams of helping others in need, succeed in the goals set by my group, and make a difference in each person's life touched by my efforts.

It wasn't until after Tracy filled in as an Operation Iraqi Children representative and told us details about the foundation, that I realized my dreams of helping others in need would come true after all. Right away, I felt interested enough in its cause to volunteer for it. After doing some research of my own, I believed that we could really do something great for these kids. When I went online to the OIC website, I saw pictures of the Iraqi children. Their faces were so powerful in sending a message of their despair and need, that I immediately started to brainstorm ideas and ways that we could collect school supplies. The best ideas we had were a school collection drive, and simply asking for the cooperation of an area 4-H Club. With the help of these two groups, we wanted to collect as many school supplies as possible. We knew that the more school supplies we collected, the more complete kits we would be able to make. The more kits we could make would ultimately result in more children we would be able to help.

I believe that the most successful and rewarding day for our group was project day. The whole semester spent planning these kits, and all of the work we put into collecting the items finally came together. When I saw the outcome of various supplies we had collected, it hit me that every kit we were to build that day would eventually be in the hands of a grateful Iraqi child. During the whole processes of making these kits, I never once looked into the future at how I would feel once our project was complete. While assembling the kits, I realized that I had lost sight of the true meaning behind our project. I had only focused on the fact that it was another school project and one I wanted to get a good grade on. But when the kits were completed, and ready to be sent overseas, the warm feeling I had was one I'll never forget, and one that I believe I will be feeling many more times.

When I signed up for this class, I dared myself to make a difference in the life of another person. Now that our class is over, I realized that I have not only affected one life, but ten. Ten was the total number of school supply kits we donated to children in Iraqi. Thanks to our efforts, ten young boys and girls will now be able to succeed in furthering their education, and look forward to a future they never knew they could have.

Now that our project is complete, I can look back at when it all started, when I dared to dream of helping a person in need, dared to succeed in the goals set by my group, and dared to make a difference in the life of each person touched by our efforts. As I look at what we have accomplished, I can say that I am proud of our final results. Though some people may not consider ten kits as much, the ten children that receive them will feel like they are holding the world in their hands.

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