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Service Day Reflection

For my service day project, I went to serve at Central Union Mission for the day. When we first arrived, we were greeted by one of the directors of the project. He sat us down and explained exactly what Central Union Mission does for the community. Men of all ages are welcomed for a warm meal and a safe place to sleep. The guests staying for the night are held to very strict expectations. They must lock up all possessions they bring with them and must shower before going to bed. None of the guests are allowed to leave the building after a certain time, for any reason. In the morning, the men are served breakfast and are welcome to leave and come back again for another overnight stay. In addition to the overnight guests, Central Union Mission has two week programs available. These programs are design to help the men get back on their feet during hard times. They are taught straight from the Bible by the Central Union Mission staff. There are doctors and dentists available to any guest to help with any health issues they might be experiencing. Overall, Central Union Mission’s goal is to help men living on the streets of Washington D.C. in any way possible.

Our group of volunteers was broken into half. The first group was assigned to cleaning the kitchen and dining room area. The second group, the group I was in, was sent upstairs to help with house keeping. The group was again divided into partners, and we were each assigned a job. Most of the pairs were asked to help make beds. My partner and I were given the job of sanitizing all stainless steel in the building. This included door knobs, door frames and elevators. While traveling throughout the building, my partner and I were thanked many times by the guests and staff for our volunteering. Once we finished this task, which took us quite awhile, we were asked to wipe down glass surfaces around the building. After finishing, both groups came together in the dining area. We then prepared to serve to guests their lunch. The lunch duties included scooping food onto plates, serving the plates, giving out beverages, and giving out dessert. I worked with the group preparing the plates, specifically putting utensils and napkins on each tray. Lunch lasted for about an hour, and then we left.

In my day of service, I realized how easy it is to forget about the small things The amount of work the people at Central Union Mission do to better their community is simply amazing. I played a small part in their daily routine, but I know that every little bit helps. In the grand scheme of things, wiping down door knobs and handing out forks is not the most noble thing a volunteer can do for their community, but I know my work was appreciated. Being thanked by the men in the house as I was cleaning windows, was very humbling. These men take nothing for granted and I was happy to make a difference, even if it was small.

In my opinion, it is obvious that the people making decisions to cut down on food stamps and similar programs do not realize the effect it will have in our society. Seeing people who are struggling to feeding themselves face to face is eye opening to say the least. I believe the media does not focus enough on helping those who do not know where their next meal is coming from. Before service day, I had never heard of Central Union Mission. If our media did more to show how many people are really struggling, I do not think it would be as likely for political leaders to cut back on programs designed to help those in need.

After reading the media coverage concerning hunger and poverty, it is apparent that these journalists have a very detached view on the subject. Each other the articles did a good job presenting factual data in a way that grabs the audience’s attention, in particular the video created by Rachel Layne for CBS News. I think Layne also does a good job at explaining key terms to make sure the viewer fully understands the issue. The music chosen to accompany the video is also well chosen, as it builds in intensity and makes the viewer feel that something must be done to resolve the conflict. While there are many great aspects to this video, I feel it could be improved. It does nothing to inform the audience exactly what changes will be made or how it will affect the community, unlike Laura Santhanam’s article for PBS News. Santhanam’s article goes into great detail on what these legislative changes will look like in the real world, opposed to on paper. Like Layne’s video, the article contains lots of factual data to the reader. Robert Verbruggen’s article for National Review is similar to Santhanam’s in the way that it exploits the flaws in our current food stamp program. All three of these articles have their strengths, but share one common weakness. None of the sources focus on the lives of those that will be impacted by these changes. While Santhanam does the best job of this, there is no personal story behind her facts. Including quotes or ideas from people that benefit from food stamps would create an emotional component that would be hard for the audience to ignore. The audience would be more likely to sympathize with people struggling to feed their families than with a journalist simply reporting the issue. I think if these articles got more personal, they would be way more affective.