

Students help the elderly

Volunteering time at retirement home proves to be a rewarding experience

In giving of oneself one receives. What exactly does one receive by being a volunteer at Learner Nursing Home? This question may be answered in a variety of ways. I can only speak about my own experience with Learner. My first year at Muhlenberg I wanted to get involved with as many programs as time allowed. I independently began attending a few activities at the nursing home, including crafts, special snack times, and visits by guests who had come to share their talents. One of the activities still stands out in my mind; three sisters, 81, 83, and 84, played the piano at the same time and the residents had the words to go along with the music. We all sang along with the piano. The smiles and warmth of each resident gave me such a positive feeling about my involvement.

I began to visit weekly with one woman in particular. I spent about an hour with her, doing a variety of things. Some days we just sat and chatted, other times would be spent playing cards, doing puzzles, and making crafts. We also attended some social activities. Although many others came to these events, just by sitting beside "adopted granny" I am confident that she knew I was there to be with her. I was her guest. Occasionally she

would glance over at me and smile; that was her way of expressing how much my visits meant to her, even without any words being spoken. My last visit we read *The Giving Tree*, by Shel Silverstein, followed by a discussion of the book's meaning.

There is so much one can share with a Learner resident and so many things one can learn about. I leave every visit with a great feeling. It is a feeling that can not be explained yet I know that both myself and my "adopted grammie" know how real this feeling is. The volunteering experience is one I wish everyone could take part in. The amount of time spent is not the importance of the experience. The importance lies in that you are giving any of your time for others.

Sophomores Christine, Sherry, and Brenda are rooming together and taking part in the Learner experience together this semester. Their experiences will each be unique and valuable.

"At first I was a little uncomfortable, because I have never worked with the elderly before. I got more self-confident as I spent more time there," says Christine who hopes the experience will help her to interact easily with others.

Brenda is happy that she is involved "because I know that the

time spent will have a positive influence on both the resident and myself."

"I am involved because it makes me happy to help other people. I think it will be a good experience because people do not appreciate senior citizens," states Sherry. "I think I can make a difference."

Freshman, Sheryl, who is currently balancing adjusting to college life, the college work load, as well as work study, donates her time to the residents of Learner. She comments, "Volunteering at Learner is a great opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life and the smiling faces of the residents are enough to make it worthwhile. I never thought a half hour could make such a difference."

Sophomore, Knute, began the program this year and expects a positive result from his involvement. He states, "I enjoy this program because in just one hour I get so much satisfaction from their excitement of seeing a new, young face. At the same time knowing that the residents' lives are enriched by a visit from me gives me a feeling of extreme gladness"

If you have any questions concerning the "Adopt-A-Grandparent" program please contact Whitney at 740-4130.