God’s Kitchen 2

An Opportunity for Teaching

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Abstract

Hunger in our society is unfortunately a common problem in this time of economic uncertainty. Hunger does not discriminate based on age, gender, ethnic origin, or faith affiliation. Feeding the hungry meets a basic need, but those who are hungry require so much more.
Service Learning Proposal Nursing 325

Nursing 325 has challenged us to seek out a service learning opportunity in our community. In this assignment we are asked to volunteer outside of our employment or educational arenas, and fill a health-related need in a volunteer setting. The purpose of this assignment is to assist our professional development and when completed, we will evaluate how this experience has impacted us both professionally and personally.

I am a volunteer at God’s Kitchen in Grand Rapids, Michigan. God’s Kitchen is one service area of the Catholic Charities of West Michigan. Catholic Charities is made up of volunteers of all faiths and serves people in the eleven county diocese of Grand Rapids. Services are provided to individuals and families regardless of their religious affiliation. The mission of Catholic Charities is “to lead diverse communities with hope and compassion by offering innovative, collaborative programs.” There are many opportunities within this charity, but I serve meals to 50-100 at a time people on a rotating basis with a small group of other volunteers. Food is delivered from the main charity site in downtown Grand Rapids. We serve the meals family style and sit and eat and offer community as well as a meal.

The group we serve changes every time. It is made up of the elderly, middle aged individuals, as well as families with young children. Often in speaking with those that are attending the meals at which I serve, I find that they travel for one community provided meal to another. I was surprised to discover that they plan their week around what days and what facility they will obtain a meal at on any given day. The nutritional content and value of these meals is the least of their considerations. As Carillo, et al. (1990) point out, the meals provided at soup kitchens often lack in nutrient content. Dieticians and nutritionists are rarely involved in meal planning, for a variety of availability and economic reasons.

Pimple (2003) states “Nurses must possess the ability to work effectively in groups to problem-solve and improve the quality of patient care.” Health care does not begin and end at the doors of a
hospital. Patients can be found in any setting where a knowledge deficit exists. I have proposed to the agency that I be allowed to provide basic nutritional and disease management education information and have it available to those who come for a meal. I have also asked if a listing of area community resources would be of benefit.

The evaluation of this service learning will need to be directed toward myself, as the clients that utilize God’s Kitchen are by nature a transient group. I have rarely seen the same people twice.


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