Service Learning Journal: Bond Hill Food Pantry

Part 1

I am continuing my hours of service at the Bond Hill Food Pantry.

The Bond Hill Food Pantry is located in an annex of the Church of the Resurrection catholic church.

I volunteer at the food pantry on Wednesday afternoons from 12:30 - 3:30pm, but, if there is a month that has five Wednesdays, it is closed every fifth Wednesday of the month.

The Bond Hill Food Pantry is a “choice pantry” which means the clients choose what they need and want from what is available at the food pantry.

First, the clients receive a card with a number on it and a food menu that is appropriate for the size of their families. I begin by calling a number and obtaining the food menu from the client who I will be assisting. Next, I walk the client around the building and through the basement of the building that is set up like a mini grocery store. Once the client finishes selecting groceries, the client is then escorted to his/her car.

The Bond Hill Food Pantry serves up to 80 families every week with the help of about 30 volunteers.

Part 2

I always enjoy volunteering at the food pantry, unless it is really cold out, then it is pretty miserable, but the afternoon goes by rather quickly. I have been volunteering at the Bond Hill Food Pantry since I was 14 years old. I was really happy last semester when the Bond Hill Food Pantry was added to the service-learning list of places to volunteer.

Most of the volunteers at the Bond Hill Food Pantry are members of the Church of the Resurrection (I am not). During the school year, most of the volunteers are retired older-adults and stay-at-home moms. In the summertime, children and high schoolers will volunteer at the food pantry as well. The group of volunteers is, not only diverse in age, but they are culturally diverse. There is an even mix of low-class, mid-class, upper-class, Caucasian, and African-American volunteers. Everyone is always so welcoming and works really well together.

The mission of the Bond Hill Food pantry is to “make life for the hungry just a little better,” as stated on their website. I am able to contribute to the mission by walking the clients through the pantry and making sure they received the groceries they needed. By providing free food, the pantry is able to help end hunger in low-income families and retired individuals.

A need that stands out to me in the Bond Hill Community is the need for food among the elderly. There is one client who has been receiving assistance from the food pantry since I started volunteering in 8th grade. He is a WWII veteran who celebrated his ninetieth birthday party a

few years ago. It can be concerning to me that he has been reliant on services from the food pantry for so many years, although it is really great that he is still able to get his nutritional needs met through this free service, it is eye-opening that this is not a short-term service for many people. It is a mean of living.

Food banks are a wonderful way to make sure the poor in the community are being taken care of, but I also think there are some clients who take advantage of free services. Most of the clients express gratitude for anything and everything that can be provided for them, but there are some clients who are never satisfied. No matter how much food is given, they try to sneak more items into their cart than what is allowed according to the size of their family. Some clients need to be reminded to respect the rules of the food pantry. Sometimes, I think standards on who can receive free services and who can't should be revised, but then I think about clients like the man who I mentioned above: retired, single, and genuinely in need of life-long financial and nutritional support.

I am able to demonstrate a professional and caring behavior towards clients by arriving at the food pantry with unbiased preconceptions of who I may be caring for. The Bond Hill Community is very diverse and nothing should take the volunteers by surprise. No matter the age, race, physical appearance, sexual orientation, level of education, or family situation of the client, it is important to treat them all with the same level of respect. It is a privilege to be able to walk the clients through the food pantry at their own pace, ask if they have any health concerns, and just show care and compassion to them.

Part 3

There were a few different concepts that I experienced during this volunteer event.

Infection Control - Micro and NUR 220: It seems as if there is a lack of infection control at the food pantry. I can understand why it is hard to maintain a sanitary environment in a place that has over one-hundred people passing through in the matter of a couple hours. Some of the clients don't have living situations where clean water and showers are readily available. The volunteers go from client to client and people sort through groceries without using standard precautions, such as gloves and consistent hand-hygiene. Although infection control may seem like a problem to me and is a priority concern in nursing practice, it isn't a priority concern for these clients, and understandably so when considering the next concept.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - Ethics and NUR 397: The food pantry provides the first level of needs for people in the Bond Hill community. People are able to receive food, toiletries, and sometimes the Bond Hill food pantry has a nurse on sight. The nurse will assess clients who are considering seeking medical attention but want to see if their condition is worth spending money on or missing work for medical care. As a nurse, it can be hard to understand and follow this sequence, but that is when collaborative care is important and we can work with social workers and case managers to get proper, complete care for patients.

Nutrition, Mobility, Cognition, and Functional Ability - NUR 305: People need assistance from food pantries because of their nutritional needs due to financial poverty. One of the causes for poverty that is identifiable among the clients is disabilities due to impaired mobility and cognition. Quite a few of the clients use assistive mobility devices. The clients are pretty open

about talking about their disabilities. The etiology of impaired mobility among some of the clients is joint and back injuries due to motor vehicle accidents, wear and tear on the bodies of former athletes, and work accidents. Some of the clients suffer from cognitive impairments due to head injuries from similar accidents. Some disabilities are due to the effects of a stroke in clients who have hypertension and diabetes. I can apply this understanding of how impaired nutrition, mobility, cognition, and functional ability can effect a person’s life by practicing health promotion to my patients in the future and safety/avoidance therapy.