

Honors Write Up  
December 31, 2017

### Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center

I chose the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center as my not for profit organization. I volunteered 25 hours and completed 27 hours of volunteer work. I chose this not for profit after researching online and reading over numerous companies and what they do and how they contribute to society. I was touched by what I read of the services the Salvation Army offers and what they do and how they give. I took such interest in their services I called the San Francisco ARC to inquire of volunteer work. I was immediately welcomed and told what I need to do in order to get approved to volunteer. I was taken back a little of the process to volunteer. I was surprised I had to wait for a background check and an interview. Willingly I did exactly what I was suppose-to do, trusted the process and completed the interview process. I was notified by Patty, the intake coordinator and was told I was approved to volunteer. I was eager to hear where I would volunteer. She quickly got right to it and told me I will be assigned to the woman's home in the Sunset District. Now I can start writing about why I really chose this not for profit.

I had high expectations for this task. I went in full confidence I would leave with answers. I would complete the volunteer work with closer and answers of why my Dad was an alcoholic and drank himself to his death. I read on the Salvation Army website they offer services to combat addiction. They offer work therapy, group and individual counseling sessions, spiritual direction and life-skills development, residents learn to abandon substance reliance. Although my father never abandoned his addiction, I wanted to learn more of who these individuals were, why they drank and what was giving them the power to stop and live their lives sober. I was on a time frame so I had 25 hours to find those answers.

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My first night on the job I met 25 women who are residents of this six-month inpatient program. They were women who are drug addicts and alcoholics. They were either sentenced by a judge to this six-month inpatient program or they admitted themselves to help battle this addiction. I was assigned to monitor the house unsupervised on Tuesdays from 7-10 PM and Sunday's 5-10 PM. It was pretty easy they didn't need much from me. I would hand out their medications, help update their clothing inventory and answer questions. Nothing difficult, pretty easy. It gave me time to spend with the ladies chatting and getting to know them. On Tuesday evenings they had an in-house AA meeting. I would sit in on the meeting and listen to the speaker share her experience, strength and hope. I was amazed by what I heard. This African American woman was addicted to crack cocaine, was a prostitute, married a drug dealer and lost her kids to CPS. She spent years in and out of jail, did a prison sentence and lived on the streets for years. One day she said to herself, "I am tired, I am broken and I don't want to live this way anymore." She went to AA, got help and got sober. She went back to school, got her high school diploma (GED), went on to San Francisco City College, received her AA degree and transferred to San Francisco State University, received her bachelor degree then earned her Masters degree. She now has been sober for many years and still attends AA meetings, helps others and gives back. She is the Director of a program in San Francisco County. I was amazed by her story, she really lived at the lowest of the low. I was happy for her and I had tears in my eyes and I can see how she really touched the women in the room. But instantly as I felt joy and happiness for her, I had a knot in my stomach. My heart began to beat fast and I had to get up and walk out of the room. I didn't want anyone to know or see what I was feeling. I was angry. I was thinking of my dad. Why wasn't he strong enough to stop drinking? Why did he choose to live the way he did? Why didn't he love me enough to stop drinking? Why didn't I make him proud enough to

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get better to go get help like these woman. I wanted to know, I needed answers and I don't want to live not knowing.

Eighteen out of 25 woman were mothers and the mothers I spoke to said they have to get better and they will do anything to get sober because they have kids and this was their motivator. I was touched by every woman that told me this. But, had to leave the house every Tuesday and Sunday night feeling sad, and angry because this was not my Dad's story. I was at a point of desperation and in hopes that the next day I would volunteer I would have the answer. The following day came and I showed up to volunteer. I showed up with a good attitude and in hopes I would miracously receive my answers. As the evening went on I helped the woman with what they usually needed help with and the evening was passing. I watched the clock tick closer to 10 PM and nothing... no answers just the same time different day. I left knowing I only had one more day to volunteer. At this point I knew for my own sanity, I will have to accept I will never know the answer why my father drank to his death why he didn't have the power to stop and I will need to be ok with this and move on. My final day of volunteer came and I did my same routine. Monitored the house, passed out medication, updated their inventory and visited with the woman. It was close to 10 PM I signed out and said good bye to the woman and left at my closing time.

I was told by Major Rachel they were so pleased with my help and needed the volunteer at the woman's home. I was a valuable asset and am welcome any time to volunteer. I am glad I volunteered at the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center, ARC. My expectation was not met because unfortunately it was self-seeking. My answers to my life long questions were not answered in my 25 hour time frame. I left empty and sad every night.

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A week went by and I was reflecting of my time spent at the ARC. I thought of the young lady who was 23 and she just graduated from the program and she asked for my help with her resume and job search. She was so grateful and said I was a huge inspiration to her and thanked me for helping her. I thought of Erin, she was 25 and she talked to me for an hour one night telling me her story and what her plans were. She told me that she really appreciated I sat and listened to her that I was easy to talk to and pretty cool. I laughed because I know I'm not easy to talk to. But I think she just wanted someone to talk to. Lastly, I thought of Kim. She sat with me Sunday evening talking to me about her Mom whom she lost when she was 8 years old. She was raised by her father who was an alcoholic who never recovered and drank all her life. She said she has been drinking alcohol since the age of 16. Kim said she drinks every day and cannot stop drinking on her own. She drinks from the time she gets up in the morning until she passes out, then wakes up and does the same routine again. She admitted herself in this program to help her live sober. I asked her if her dad was living in San Francisco. Kim said he died 5 years ago of cirrhosis to the liver. He could never get sober, his pain was to great.

On my walk that day reflecting of my time at the ARC I found the answer. His pain was to great. This is what came to me. But, came to me from Kim. Not that night, but a week later in a thought of what she said. "My father's pain was to great". He could not live in reality after my mother died, his pain was to great. He was left with three children to raise ages 8, 7 & 4. He lost his wife and his three children lost their mother and he would live to raise them. He couldn't do it sober. He drank himself to death. His pain was to great. I had taken a deep breath, cried and forgave him and was able to say I forgive you, and I love you and I am sorry you suffered too. My story was similar to Kim's story but I didn't see it right away. I was busy searching for other things to answer my question.

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What an amazing journey. Who would have known my honors project requirement would lead to such a great change in my life. I may not have done this assignment perfectly or even wrote my paper based on direction but I am forever grateful I was given the opportunity to accept the volunteer work, show up and find my answers. Thank you, I am forever grateful.