

A dedicated volunteer's story

by Ben Polk

When asked why people volunteer, Rose Gruenwald, an Edgewater Village Chicago communications intern, said it's because we should. "We should help each other in any way we can with any amount of time that we can. If it's not time, maybe it's resources," she said.

What drew her to volunteering? Rose always has been interested in communications. "It's the idea of helping to run something, to do something bigger than myself, to reach out to a lot of different people and getting to know the people who work." She said she thought about majoring in political science, but wants to feel that she's doing more on an immediate basis. Rose pointed out, "There's a really big need for immediate aid that politics wouldn't necessarily allow me to do."

Previously, Rose volunteered with the Greater Chicago Food Depository and was on the Lunch Bus program for kids in summer. She was responsible for loading up the van with meals and going into different communities. The goal was to go to areas where kids needed free meals over the summer, who weren't getting them. She said, "We filled that gap." She's also been a volunteer for different causes since high school and comes to Edgewater Village with several years of hands-on experience and personal knowledge.

Her biggest takeaway from volunteering is the human connection. "It's possible to go anywhere," she said, "and meet anyone and make those connections to hopefully form lasting connections between organizations of people." She continued, "If I hadn't been out there meeting the clients we were working with, I couldn't know how best to help them fill the gaps."

Rose is dedicated to making a positive difference in peoples' lives. "Volunteering is about those you work with and those you are serving," she said. "I've met a lot of great, friendly, hardworking people, who are out there to make a difference, and they care so much." Communications is at the heart of it. It's community and outreach and making change, not just watching. When someone asks her about volunteering, she said, "Do something you care about and just go try it. You can try out most volunteer shifts for a few hours with no obligation to go back, so you might as well."

Her ultimate goal in 10-15 years is to work in not only a physical community but an identity community helping others. "I live by the idea that it takes a village. It's my personal motto that I apply to friends and family and the way that I work. For anything, it takes a village. Like it or not, we are the village."

In May, Rose will complete her degree in advocacy in social change, part of the School of Communications at Loyola University.

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