Laguna Honda Hospital Essay, Research Paper

Exploration of various activities and interests has helped me gain life experience and develop spiritually as well. In pursuit of my passion of the arts, I have enrolled in ceramics programs during the past four years at a local community center and taken drawing and sculpture classes at school. I have painted and assembled backdrops and scenery for school plays, and several of my artworks are on display around the school.

This past summer I put my artistic talents to use when I volunteered as a camp counselor for children ages six to twelve. Volunteer opportunities have also brought me into closer contact with the elderly in society. Two years ago, I registered as a volunteer at Laguna Honda Hospital, a nursing home in San Francisco. For several hours every week, I wheelchaired senior citizens to and from concerts, kept them company and

made many wonderful friends. This experience introduced me to a side of society I had never previously considered. As each week passed, I learned something new about the patients and about myself. I listened, laughed, joked, and enjoyed music with them.

My appreciation for music, which I acquired through 13 years of piano lessons also deepened my relationship with one patient, Mary, whom I occasionally played the piano for after the concerts. Because of the large age gap, communication was not always easy. Music provided common ground for conversation. Working at Laguna Honda Hospital gave me an amazing opportunity to share my talents with a truly appreciative audience. Working in a hospital, I naturally encountered much suffering. Although my job simply was to provide companionship and love, I faced many challenging situations which often caused me to question myself. Patients with amputations, Alzheimer’s, AIDS, and other illnesses were lonely and in desperate need of friendship. Volunteering for over two years there, I also lost friends to death. All these events helped me realize the importance of my role as a volunteer and fueled a desire to move beyond myself—to be of use, to help others.

I have realized now that I am happiest when others are happy, and my deepest wish is for everyone to be content, peaceful, and free of suffering. My work has brought me into closer contact with both the old and young in society. From the carefree youths and the wisdom of the seniors I have learned all the more the importance of every living moment. As Camus’ quote illustrates, the dedication and effort that one puts into his/her work now will determine the success of the future. As a small part of the larger body of the University of California, I will take action to effect change in other’s lives. Art and music provide one form of communication through which I can cross the divide from “being” alive to truly living. By giving my best to each present moment, I can make a change and help future generations achieve greater happiness and success.