

Service Learning Leads to Career Success

Vicki Price, CNA, Gentiva Hospice



Cissy Wilkinson, Manager of Volunteer Services, states, “Vicki started out as an administrative and patient care volunteer. She helped us in the office by answering the phone and assisting with other administrative duties. She also provided caregiver relief to our hospice patients and their families. She was a wonderful volunteer and worked very hard. We decided to hire her as a PRN CNA. She has

trained in the Gentiva Hospice Philosophy of Care and is doing a great job. We are happy to have her as part of our team.”

Vicki describes her experience with CTC’s Center for Service Learning Program in this brief essay: When I first learned of the opportunity to do 30 hours of service learning course work (15 for English with Jean Bowen and 15 for Sociology with Cynthia Holly), I decided to look into the community service options on the CTC service learning page. I have dreamed of being a hospice nurse for years. Looking over the community service options, Gentiva Hospice caught my eye right off the bat. I contacted them and held my breath waiting for a response knowing how most places are so busy that it might take a while.

Cissy Wilkinson, Gentiva’s Volunteer Coordinator, contacted me later the same day. She was so nice and invited me to come the very next day. She informed me that I could answer the phones and help out in the office, making notebooks and such. I could also go to people’s homes for caregiver relief. This interested me the most since I have my CNA license. Cissy explained that I would not be able to nurse anyone while acting as a volunteer. I also figured that having my CNA license would help make people more comfortable about leaving their loved ones in my care. In addition, I could offer service as a bereavement counselor and visit with people to lend an ear to anyone who wanted to talk about their loved ones that have passed. I have to admit, the role of bereavement did not appeal to me.

I enjoyed going to the office and answering the phones and helping put together notebooks full of information for the families whose loved ones are under hospice care. This also assisted me in my English studies. I came to know all the ladies that work at the office and they are all so nice, which assisted me with understanding social groups for sociology! I also got to know all the nurses as they were coming in and out for supplies and meetings; it was like being surrounded by angels with everyone being so sweet. One of my assignments was for a family where I sat for a lady so the husband could go buy groceries without the worry of leaving her alone. She slept most of the time but would wake up and smile at me. Plus, at the office they have cookies! In the break room there is an oven dedicated to Otis Spunkmeyer cookies; they are eye crossing good.

They made me feel right at home and were all so nice and thankful that I was there to help. After my thirty hours of service learning was complete, I would joke about it being the cookies that brought me back, but it was the people. I told Cissy that I would love a job but I could only work weekends between my school workload and my children. The Lord works in mysterious ways! I would have never dreamed that participating in service learning for CTC would bring me one step closer to my dreams. I now work every other weekend and a day here and there. I am over the moon to have a job working with people that will work around my school schedule. Once I obtain my RN degree, they will move me right on up. If not for service learning, they probably would not have hired me since I have no other nursing experience. Amazingly because of my service learning work they are not only giving me a chance, but they have trained me to where I can go out and care for people with confidence. I am one step closer to fulfilling my dream. – Vicki Price

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Contact the Center for Service Learning to learn more about this and similar opportunities.