

Remo C. Bertugli Memorial Award Essay

Contestant #1

Sometimes in life, we only get to know people for a very short time before they move onto better places. Sometimes these people are the most precious and interesting people you will ever meet. I volunteer at Golden Living Center in Waynesburg several times a month. I have met and made friends with many of the residents there. I have only known them for a short time, but they are some of the most interesting people I have ever met. Sadly, I know that I will not know some of them much longer, but I would like to make the most of the time that I have with them now.

Volunteering at Golden Living Center has changed my life in so many positive ways. I have learned so much about the residents living there. Every time I visit, the residents and I exchange our stories and memories with each other. I learn something new in every story they share with me. Lots of the residents receive visits from their families from time to time. Other residents haven't seen their families in years. It breaks my heart to see some of the residents wait for the visitors that will never come. They have learned to deal with it though. They have made a new family. This family consists of all the nurses, workers, other residents, and all of the volunteers that come, I being one of them. I love to see their faces light up whenever I walk into the room. After all, they consider me family.

All of the residents at Golden Living are there for a reason. Most of them have some kind of medical problem. Some have more serious problems than others. Some of them have Alzheimer's, Huntington's disease, heart problems, or suffer from brain damage. For over half of the residents, a wheelchair is their only form of mobility. The age range of the residents is anywhere from the youngest being 43 to the oldest being over 100. Watching these people suffer from all kinds of medical phenomena at such ages makes me realize how truly blessed I am to be of good health. It also makes me admire them so much more watching them deal with all of these things while trying to keep a positive attitude.

Deciding to volunteer at Golden Living Center was one of the best choices I have ever made. I have met so many new people that I would have probably never met if it weren't for volunteering. Whenever I first told all of them that I was going to participate in the Rain Day Pageant, they all became overwhelmed with joy. They are so happy for me and truly believe that I can win. They have so much faith in me that it gives me the drive to succeed not only for myself, but for all of them, too. The belief they have in me to win is almost unreal and it makes me feel almost as if I can't let them down. They treat me as if I am already their queen. I am so thankful that I have gained so many new friends and such a wonderful support system. I am so happy to say that volunteering at Golden Living Center has changed my life.