

## **First-Year Writing with Service-Learning (ENGW1114)**

This semester, our course was partnered with Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly (LBFE) and students engaged with the communities at Peterborough Senior Center and Mt. Pleasant Home, along with a couple of alternative LBFE sites. Here is a compilation of students' favorite experiences from service learning this semester!

❖ My favorite community engagement experience has been having a set time every week where no other responsibility weighed on my mind besides the conversation. It allowed me to take a step back from the constant hustle of my other courses and focus on what was happening in front of me. It also let me physically separate myself from the campus, which aided my focus. After this semester, I have a lot more memories to reflect on with the older participants and know the surrounding Boston area a little better.

❖ My favorite experience has been getting to know Diane better during my visits. It's truly impressive to listen to her stories, her vivid recollections, and the passion in her voice. As we talked, I found out we share quite a few interests, such as a love for mathematics. Connecting over these commonalities has been incredibly enriching. Additionally, being able to share my own stories with her adds another layer to our meetings. I enjoy telling her about my first year in Boston and hearing her thoughts on it, especially since she has spent her whole life here.

❖ One of my favorite experiences at the community engagement site was meeting Mr. Bill Wright, a former government worker turned political consultant. His anecdotes about working near Barack Obama, from their days at Columbia University to their professional careers, were both fascinating and insightful. Bill's stories offered a unique glimpse into the inner workings of politics and the White House, filled with little-known secrets and anecdotes that left a lasting impression on me. Beyond the anecdotes, interacting with Bill underscored the importance of civic engagement and the power of storytelling in fostering understanding and connection within communities. His passion for making a difference and dedication to his work inspired me to become more actively involved in my own community. Meeting Bill Wright was a memorable and enlightening experience that reinforced the significance of engaging with others and learning from their diverse perspectives.

❖ My favorite part of being at the engagement sites is that I get to meet people from all different backgrounds. Connecting with people from different backgrounds made me think about who I am as a person, and how each person's identity is so different from others. It also made me think about how a person's identity, knowledge of the world, and perspective all

change with age. No matter how hard I try to imagine I can't picture how some of the elders saw the world, and I think the older you are, the more clearly you see the world in a way.

❖ My favorite experience in the community engagement part of this course has been getting to know Bill. Through our conversations, I feel that we have gained mutual respect for one another and developed an actual relationship. Bill is in his late eighties and grew up in a town outside of Boston. His life has had plenty of high highs and very low lows. Every week I look forward to going down to Mt.Pleasant and just sitting and listening to his stories. He is a very complex character, and I've enjoyed getting to understand him and learn about his past. There is so much to know about Bill that I'm struggling to decide what to write about him.

❖ My favorite experience was my first time at Mt Pleasant home, I met two ladies and we started a conversation, and then they got more comfortable talking with each other. We began to talk about where I was going on vacation. One of the ladies told me she went to Moroooco many years back, which started a discussion about her trip and how different it is now. This sparked a deeper conversation about how the world has changed, and how stereotypes and such have changed, and how many countries are way more accepting than they were in the past.

❖ My favorite experience is always looking forward to playing a competitive game of dominoes with not only the older adults at Spencer House, but also Uju and Olivia. Up to this date, we are still figuring out the strategy of the more experienced players since they always seem to win, unless we win by luck. We initially played the classic dominoes as a group of three, but since the game became more popular as the weeks went by, we upgraded to the jumbo set of 96 pieces, usually competing in a group of 12. While playing, we enjoy snacks prepared by one of the caretakers at Spencer House. My favorite has been the homemade banana muffins since the first time I've tried them. Absolutely delicious!

❖ My favorite experience in community engagement has been getting to know Mary Ann, especially last week when we were writing in the little booklet together. It has been very interesting to hear all of her stories and experiences and to see how crazy of a memory she has that she can remember the exact date of everything that happened during her childhood. It has also been interesting to hear about her battle with diabetes.

❖ My favorite experience at my community engagement site was observing the different personalities and opinions of the older generation. Speaking about news and aspects of the

economy has sparked interest in a few older gentlemen. Simply learning stories from an individual's life is a great experience in my opinion.

❖ My favorite experience would be one of the older adults that I've met at my community engagement site. It was the second time for my community engagement and it was incredible. The older adult brought photographs of her old apartment and when she was young. The photos were so aesthetically pleasing and unique. One of them was this big feast they had in their apartment during New Year's. She's an artist so all the photos were very artistic and their apartment is decorated in a unique and distinct way. It was just cool to see something like that and it inspired me to take better photos for future memories.

❖ Initially, the community engagement aspect of this course was something I saw and thought "Well it's mandatory so I have to go." However, now I look forward to Wednesdays. I appreciated how it forced me to go out and talk to people and be active. I especially appreciate the two Brendas I was fortunate enough to meet. conversing with them is extremely easy and enjoyable. The environment is very judgment-free and very informative, especially for someone who just came to Boston. One memorable experience was the meeting after spring break. Not seeing people for longer than usual meant we had more to share. That meeting was full of stories that happened to us during this two week period. Some were funny and some led to deeper conversations, but throughout the entire time, I didn't feel judged or anything of that sort. I felt extremely comfortable speaking with them and I think that they felt the same. Another experience was when BU students came to interview some groups, and the Peterborough staff members immediately picked us out. I just saw that as proof that we were very close, not that our group needed any validation for it.

❖ My favorite experience during my time at the community engagement site was the day when Jacob, an older adult, taught me and Denise how to play dominoes. It was such a simple yet memorable moment that truly captured the essence of intergenerational learning and connection. As Jacob patiently explained the rules and strategies of the game, I could feel a sense of camaraderie building between us. Despite our age differences, we were brought together by the shared experience of learning something new and enjoying each other's company.

Photos of First-Year Writing students engaging with our community partners!

















