

Organization Project

Over the course of this semester I have learned a lot about leadership, the varying approaches people take and what a social movement really is. The social movement that I chose to do work in was helping people disabilities. I volunteered at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital in the speech pathology department. The idea behind this social movement is improving the quality of life for people with disabilities through their education, their resources and changing the stigmas that surround mental disabilities such as autism. This social movement was unlike others because there is not one big group standing up trying to change the way the world thinks about people with disabilities. This is more of a quiet change, people are working to make a difference in the lives of these children on a small scale that in the hopes that enough people do it, a big change can happen.

When it comes to disabilities, people who do not have them are often uncomfortable around people that do. This is not usually through malicious intent, but because people do not like when something is different from what they understand. Children with mental disabilities process the world differently, many of them have problems understanding social cues and societal conventions so they have trouble interacting with people. During my previous experience and my work at the hospital I asked people why the work they were doing was important. Many of the speech pathologists who I asked had a story about a family member or friend who was diagnosed with a mental disability and they wanted to improve the quality of life for other people like them, but one person answered differently and her answer stuck out to me. She told me that she wanted to spend her life doing something meaningful, she had no desire to change the world, she wanted to dedicate her life to making someone else's better. She was not in it for the recognition, she said she would be proud of the work she was doing even if she could

make just one person's life better. This is what this movement is about, it is making small improvements in people's lives so that a bigger change can occur.

Cincinnati Children's Hospital in itself is doing amazing things for the care of children, particularly the speech pathology department. The location where I volunteered was the college hill campus, many of the patients were from low income areas and faced more problems than I can imagine, because on top of having a disability they came from areas that did not have the resources they need. The kids who were being treated at the hospital were living there temporarily, many of them had violence problems making them a danger to themselves or the people in their lives. This was not something that I had experienced before so I had a discussion about why this occurred more often there. The answer was funding and knowledge. Many of the kids with disabilities were bullied because there was no one telling them that these kids had genetic disabilities, something they had no control over and cannot change. There is an ignorance, particularly in kids, that causes them to lash out against those that are different. One thing that one speech pathologist was working on was a program that would go to schools and educate children about genetic disabilities like autism. By educating the children, there is a chance that the speech pathologists, the teachers, and the students can work together to make a more accepting environment for everyone.

Volunteering at the hospital was an interesting experience because it provided insight into aspects of the difficulties children with disabilities face that I had not been exposed to. I was able to watch people who had the power to make a change and collaborate with them. This is a social movement that is gaining momentum as more people want to see everyone live life to its fullest capacity, there is room for change and people are taking advantage.