

Each spring, we are fortunate to have many groups of college students from all over the country volunteer one week of service at God's Love, during their spring breaks. While many of their peers take to the beach, our Alternative Spring Break college students take to our kitchens, roads and offices, to help us continue to achieve our mission to feed people who are too sick to shop or cook for themselves.

One such group, from Harvard University, visited us at the beginning of March, and they were a fantastic bunch! They had such a good time (and we did, too!), that they posted a blog about their visit on their Harvard service blog site, Service Break. Please see below for the entire post!

And so it begins... The familiar yet unwelcoming sounds of cell phone alarms could be heard throughout the apartment at 7:30 AM. Time to get up. We were scheduled to work today from 9am to 4pm at God's Love We Deliver (GLWD), an organization which prepares and delivers meals to people living with HIV/AIDS and other diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and Alzheimer's, throughout New York City and parts of New Jersey. We had been told we would be on kitchen duty (which we thoroughly prepared for by watching the Food Network for a good 2 hours last night). We all managed to scarf down a quick breakfast- the Nutella and banana sandwich seemed to be a popular choice, and we may or may not have finished an entire jar this morning. Whoops.

After a long subway ride from our 180th street apartment to SoHo, we arrived at the GLWD building, signed in and were greeted by one of the full-time employees. He put on a short video for us which told us a little bit more about the organization and what we would be doing during our two shifts today. I think that, after watching the video, we all gained a greater appreciation for just how big of an impact this organization has on the patients it serves. Many of these people have attested that they would have surely died if GLWD had not come to help.

Hospice nurse Ganga Stone planted the seed for GLWD in 1985 when she started preparing meals for one of her AIDS patients. The organization got its name from something a minister said to Ganga about the work she was doing- according to him, she was not merely delivering food, but God's love. The organization started out serving only HIV/AIDS patients but has since expanded to serve patients with other illnesses such as cancer and diabetes, delivering over 3,000 meals a day. And the most impressive part: all meals are prepared by hand. GLWD firmly believes the patients it serves can feel the love the volunteers put in to preparing the food.

Freshly motivated and reminded of our mission, we were led to the kitchen where we washed up and picked up gloves, aprons and hair nets. We looked pretty legit, and were ready to tackle the meal preparations for the day!

Most of the group was put on onion-chopping duty (some later defected to other tasks when the tears became overwhelming), though Matt and I were given the task of rolling up meatballs. The best part of the morning shift was having the chance to talk to some of the other volunteers. We spoke with one woman who had been volunteering with GLWD for over nine years! She told us that she loved volunteering with GLWD because she liked working with her hands- she felt like she was doing more good by working to prepare meals than by doing something like stuffing envelopes for fund raising. We also talked to a guy who had begun volunteering three years ago after he retired. We had a bunch of different conversations about what it was like being pre-med at Harvard, what sorts of specialties we were thinking of pursuing, and at one point we even discussed the merits (or lack thereof) of haggis (for those of you who have never heard of haggis, it is a Scottish dish of an organ medley cooked in sheep stomach...appetizing.) The company was great, and it made the first shift fly by!

After a nice lunch break we returned for our second shift. This time we had a few different tasks. We formed an assembly line to put together 1,000 frozen dinners, and after that we skinned and chopped up over 200 pounds of onions and carrots. I'd say we all got pretty good at chopping vegetables after this experience. And no one lost any fingers (although Hugh nicked himself when carrot-cutting)!

We spent the rest of the day exploring the city, hitting up Times Square and dining at Little Italy. We were all pretty exhausted by the time we got back to the apartment, but we won't have to wake up as early tomorrow. We're scheduled to visit Albert Einstein School of Medicine in the early afternoon and meet with some current students to talk about what it's like to be medical students.

Today was really enjoyable! We had a lot of work to do, but in the process we had the chance to get to know one another a little better. Wednesday and Thursday will be a lot of fun, since we will have the chance to deliver the meals we helped prepare to patients all over NYC and New Jersey. As one of the volunteers told us today: after going on delivery rounds, we will probably have seen more of New York than have most lifelong New Yorkers. Looking forward to the rest of the week!

We repost this March 15, 2011 blog post by Harvardian, Jason Satre, from [Service Break](#).

For the complete view of this wonderful blog post, and more from the Harvard Service site, please [go here](#).