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Outreach Essay

 Throughout the semester, I have been given many opportunities to perform a Community Outreach Project. My favorite service activity that I have participated in while at Longwood University, has to be the service retreat at Hull Springs Farm. The retreat was jam-packed full of service opportunities that allowed us to give back to the Northern Neck communities. We gleaned broccoli for the local food pantry, which is something I had only heard about before I went. Gleaning broccoli is done once the farmers have planted, grown, and harvested all of the “best” crops. Then, people, like the food pantry of the Northern Neck, come in and cut the rest of the broccoli. We had so much fun in the field and I learned a lot about the food pantry. Their goal is to provide the Northern Neck with as many healthy options as possible. Many farmers allow them to harvest their left over crops. It is definitely a good cause. Another thing we did while on the farm, was rake leaves and acorns around the big house. The farm will rent out the big house for big events such as weddings, and we helped to clean up the yard and make it look nice. We also collected acorns for an animal rehabilitation center that uses the acorns to feed the animals that they are rehabilitating. In doing this, I learned that a “proper acorn” sinks when you soak it in water for five minutes, and the others float. This was the test that the rehabilitation center gave us to use to deem acorns good. I also learned that not many acorns sink. We collected quite a few acorns, but were only able to give a very small portion of those to the rehabilitation center. After that, we kayaked and canoed to a beach area in the Potomac River. While there, we picked up trash and did a little exploring as well.

 I chose to go on the honors service retreat because I had been to Hull Springs Farm with my Anthropology 101-50 class and really just wanted to go back. Also, I really wanted to be part of a service project that would help other people. In high school, I was constantly volunteering, and when I came to college, I have slowed down a lot. I really missed it. I had no idea what to expect when I signed up to go. Before we went, we were not really aware of what we would be doing. We were all surprised when we were told we would be gleaning broccoli, and I think some of us thought we would be *cleaning* broccoli. We were all surprised at how much fun it was and it was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. I think that all in all, we had a blast serving others and getting to know each other better in the process. I know that I got to know some of my fellow Honors College citizen leaders, who are older than I am, that I would probably never meet otherwise. Also, I got to know other students who are my age that I may not have interacted with otherwise.

 I would most definitely go back to Hull Springs Farm! I had so much fun in such a short amount of time. Even though it was freezing when we went, the experience was well worth it. I thoroughly enjoyed serving the people of the Northern Neck community around Hull Springs Farm. I enjoyed the atmosphere of the farm and I really liked getting to know my fellow honors college people. I was impacted by my time on this service retreat. I learned so much about the need on the Northern Neck. The Northern Neck Food Bank serves the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, Westmoreland, Middlesex, and Essex. That is a lot of people that need a lot of food. I found it really interesting that not only was the food bank devoted to providing meals for these people, but also, they wanted to provide them with nutritional meals. I have to say I was inspired by the Northern Neck Food Bank and what they were doing. In future honors college service retreats, I hope that we can work with this organization again.

 Community service is important to the community, Longwood, and myself in a variety of ways. It is important to the community because it leads to the betterment of all of the parties involved. When the students of Longwood University come together with the community, that forms a unique bond between the people of the community and Longwood. This bond can ultimately lead to stronger relationships in the future, which can not only help to strengthen the community, but also help to better the students of Longwood and the university as a whole. Community service can help Longwood University in many ways. It can strengthen the relationship between the university and the community. It can help to strengthen the relationships that students have with each other, and the relationships that students have with professors and faculty members.

 Community service is extremely important to me. It has always been instilled in me to help other people, especially those in need. I love volunteering and serving others because I like to get to know other people. I like learning about other people’s backgrounds and why they do what they do. I believe that community service is not just a way to be involved in and learn about the community, but also a way to get to know others better. It is about coming together for one common cause for the betterment of the community as a whole.