

## **Oral Health Promotion Activity Reflection Paper**

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Lifetime commitment to service is a pledge for every healthcare provider, whether it is in the clinic or in the community; they should always uphold values to further the public's awareness of how to live a healthier lifestyle. It has been difficult to exercise this prerogative throughout the busy and unforgiving schedule of this first year of dental school but I have managed to find quality opportunities this semester.

Since college, I have found that for however great my passion for learning is, it is matched in the rewarding response in successfully transferring this knowledge. While I use tutoring as a means of procuring a modest amount of spending money, I also dedicate my time to pro bono tutoring in the underserved neighborhood of Jamaica Plain. This practice of communicating Math and Science in understandable terms to middle school aged kids is a tremendous opportunity in gaining experience in treating a vulnerable population. The majority of children prefer to spend after school time not on homework, much like they don't enjoy time in the dental office. Learning techniques on communicating the importance of schoolwork, much like proper oral hygiene requires time and practice, otherwise it may be ineffective.

The most important lesson I learn from my own tutoring is that each individual learns at their own pace and you need to be able to adapt to their learning style. Building a rapport with a child and earning their trust is essential in delivering optimal tutoring as well as clinical care.

The other program I was fortunate to participate in was volunteering for two Friday Night's at a local well-established soup kitchen, Arlington Street Church, Friday Night Supper Program (<http://www.fridaynightsupper.org/>). This soup kitchen provides a well-balanced Friday night meal to impoverished and homeless patrons of Boston. Many of the 100 individuals dwell in close proximity to Tufts. During the long and difficult month of February this winter, I felt obliged to help in some way, which is what led me to this soup kitchen.

My connection from our OHP curriculum for this event had most to do with nutrition. In the winter month's nourishment is vital for everyone, especially those susceptible to malnutrition, such as the aforementioned population. The meals that we provided were high in calories, vitamins, and protein. The Nutritional value of the meal is not the only thing necessary for consideration while treating this population, the others included: careful hygiene considerations when preparing/serving food, and compassion for the individuals who are very far removed from society. This vulnerability and volatility were exacerbated by the extreme weather. This was why extra time was allowed for the kitchen to be opened for straggling patrons, and extra food was allocated in doggie bags.

Dealing with these population are never easy, but like tutoring and healthcare, trust can help bridge a connection capable of delivering health information to populations in need. As mentioned, I have always enjoyed and found value in these service opportunities,

as they are real ways to practice health delivery to populations in need and not just talking about them. I very much look forward to continuing this, well beyond the scope of the course, as this is a lifelong learning process.