

I started volunteering with Between Friends Club in 2010 at Camp Bonaventure. Being a new immigrant to Canada, I was looking to get involved with an organization where I could work with youth and is within the area of my intended career. Luckily, I found this organization. Volunteering with Between Friends Club has been very enjoyable and fruitful to me and I know that I can still contribute more to the organization by continuing my involvement and through the area of study that I am pursuing.

I am currently studying under the Bachelor of Health Sciences program with a major in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Calgary. This program is very research oriented. As a Biomedical Sciences major, career paths lead to disease research, covering areas such as genetics. Another possible career path that I am considering is going into medicine. Because of the nature of my studies, I decided to involve myself with an organization wherein I can utilize my knowledge about health.

During the summer of 2010, I volunteered at Camp Bonaventure for about 9 days and I usually volunteered with the Grizzlies (16-17 years old) and the Day Trippers (18+ years old). Although my time there was brief, I really enjoyed the company of the participants, the staff, and the other volunteers. That was why I returned this year and volunteered with the same groups for the two months that Camp Bonaventure is running (around 150 hours).

Volunteering at Camp Bonaventure taught me many things about persons with disabilities. Coming from a third world country, recreation for persons with disabilities is not considered as a priority by many. In fact, I could say that some stigma around this issue still exists from where I have come from. That is why whenever I see the participants at Camp Bonaventure having fun, celebrating achievements, and making friends, I always think how great it would be if all persons with disabilities had this opportunity. Through volunteering, I expanded my knowledge about disabilities besides the etiology I learn in the classroom. I learned about the importance of things that I may have taken for granted, such

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as the empowering effect of independence and choice. Volunteering with Between Friends Club also reinforced my thoughts about the career path that I have chosen. I feel more secure now about my choice to immerse in health sciences rather than other applied sciences or engineering. My experiences at Camp Bonaventure have also impacted me so much that I feel a deep bond with the participants. I have made many friends during the time I have volunteered. I feel very thankful that I have contributed to them and, in turn, to the organization and the community.

My involvement with Between Friends Club is a give and take relationship. As I have outlined above, I have taken many things from my experiences in Camp Bonaventure. I am also very thankful to Between Friends Club when they profiled me on their website. To have been given recognition for investing only some of my time and my friendship is very heart warming. I feel that I have benefited very much by volunteering with Between Friends Club and that is why I intend to continue giving back to the organization. For instance, this year, I tried for a position as a group leader at Camp Bonaventure. However, I knew that I would not be accepted for the position for I only started getting involved the year before and lacked leadership experience. Although this is the case, I will continue volunteering or possibly working with Between Friends Club for the years to come because I have made many friends that I am looking forward to meet again next summer at Camp Bonaventure or during the W.E.S.O.A.R. programs.