

“Share our similarities, celebrate our differences.” – Scott Peck. I don’t think I truly understood this quote until I started volunteering with Between Friends Club. Previous to volunteering with the Between Friends Club I had never interacted with people with disabilities; and upon coming to camp for the first time I was very nervous, however within a few minutes realized how amazing it can be. Between Friends Club has changed my life in an extraordinary way.

Thus far, I have been with Between Friends Club for seven years, totalling over 1000 hours. When I first started with Between Friends Club I was just twelve years old. I started by volunteering at Camp Bonaventure, and continued to do so until I was finally old enough to be hired by the club. From there I began running W.E.S.O.A.R. programs. I ran many programs such as The Movie Program, Young Adult Swim and Night on the Town North. When summer rolled around, I began working at Camp Bonaventure in the Grizzly group. This is where the Between Friends Club has had the greatest influence on me. Not only was I greatly impacted by the campers themselves, but the staff felt more like a family than coworkers. I suddenly began to feel like I had encountered people who I could truly relate to, and who understood my interest in the disability community. It quickly became very clear that it was going to be a fantastic summer. Throughout my first summer, I learned so much, not only about the disability community, but also about myself as well.

Between Friends Club changed my life for the better, and in a very drastic way. Throughout my years of volunteering, I quickly fell in love with the disability community. It allowed me to see unique differences in everyone I worked with, and it began to give me meaning, as well as a sense of purpose to my life. This revelation has led me to base my life goals on focus on a career working with people with disabilities.

I am currently enrolled in a double major of Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, combined with Psychology at the University of Calgary. This course of study will have a positive impact on Between Friends Club as it directly relates to those individuals with disabilities. I will learn many

techniques and skills that I can use in my future endeavours. Through my studies, I have been able to see many different sides of the disability community and get a real sense of what it is like, where there could be improvements made, and where things sometimes work out perfectly. My courses have led me to some amazing practicums, some heated discussions within the class, as well as some new perspectives on disabilities as a whole. I truly look forward to continuing my journey through the Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies degree program.

I feel I have also had a large impact on Between Friends Club. I have made an impact not only on the participants that have been in my group, but the families they are part of as well. Through working at Camp Bonaventure, I have met some amazing families, and have continued to have a great relationship with many of them outside of camp. I was also able to recruit some new program personnel, fundraise for some great donations for the club and advocate for the wonderful services the Between Friends Club provides.

Through Between Friends Club, I have been given many opportunities to not only improve my skills, but to create connections within the community as a whole, as well as open doors for future opportunity; for that, I will be forever grateful. In the future, I look forward to continuing my work with Between Friends Club. I am currently on the committee for Friends in Motion, which I am very excited about. In the spring, I hope to run more W.E.S.O.A.R. programs, and look forward to another exciting summer at Camp Bonaventure. Between Friends Club has changed my life in many incredible ways and I cannot wait to continue my journey of discovery with the club and all its members.