



*Transformation*

## TRANSFORMATION

### Nutrition in a Nutshell

My sophomore semester I took the Methods of Teaching class. It was the most terrifying and anxiety ridden time of my entire academic career at Fontbonne. I learned early that this class called for numerous class presentations and workshop activities. They say that the fear of public speaking is the second most common fear next to death, and I believe it. I feared getting up in front of groups of people to talk. To say that I was out of my comfort zone is an understatement.

Our semester long project included the development of a lesson plan to present to an audience in the community. I immediately chose to bring my project to work and decided to create a basic nutrition lesson on healthy eating and creative meal swaps. I work with individuals diagnosed with intellectual disabilities who frequently struggle with healthy meal choices. My co-workers, who care, cook, and shop for these individuals experience the same food battles as well. These individuals, and my co-workers, comprised the audience I would soon make my big presentation/lesson to. I figured this was a win-win for all of us as I could do it during my workday and get a grade for an assignment. More importantly, it was a safe decision, and I knew I could do it in front of folks I already had established relationships with.

Throughout the semester I created, adjusted, and modified a lesson plan called, “Nutrition in a Nutshell.” Every two weeks my classmates and I would practice our lesson in front of one another, workshop ideas, and get feedback from our instructor. It was all done in preparation for the final presentation in front of an audience in the community - the folks at work. As each “micro teaching” in front of my peers approached, I could feel myself becoming more and more anxious. I even remember breaking out in hives because I was so stressed out from the experience. I was always grateful when it was over.

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As I expected, I was nervous for my final lesson plan even though I saw and worked with these folks nearly every day! My final presentation was ok. It was not great, it was just ok. To my surprise, I received great feedback and earned a good grade on the final project. At the end of the semester, I had to reflect on my experiences by creating a website and then had to present it to my classmates. Eh, another presentation! I was very proud of the website because it showcased my journey of microteachings throughout the semester, and the final lesson plan project. A frightening experience was finished, and I survived! I recall creating the website and spending an entire day working on fine-tuning the details. I wanted to display and show my hard work despite my mediocre feelings of the presentation itself. Needless to say, I was happy when the class was over.

As my semesters went by and presentations became the norm, I realized my appreciation for the Methods of Teaching class. I liked the creativity that went into making and developing a lesson where I could encourage audience participation through activities. The process of creating helped strengthen my desire to educate in a positive, fun way. I still have anxiety about getting up in front of people, however, the more practice I have, the more confident I become. I think this is only natural and even the best public speakers still get nervous.

I believe education is vitally important. I believe that I have a responsibility to ensure that a thoughtful message is passed along to the learner. In the dietetics profession, teaching and education is ever-present. Being able to adapt to the learner and possessing confidence in your ability to share knowledge is critical in reaching the audience. Dietetics gives us the opportunity to share nutrition information that affects people's lives. It is critical that our messages are scientifically based and approached with a person-centered philosophy. This may mean that we work through how to best support someone who is newly diagnosed with diabetes by teaching

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them how to count carbohydrates, or educating a classroom full of children on MyPlate food groups.

The semester long experience was transformative as it helped me to embrace the uncomfortable feeling that is so often associated with public speaking. I recognize that stretching yourself is a key part of growth. In hindsight, I wished I would have pushed myself a little more and decided on a different group of people to give my final lesson plan presentation.

Opportunities to educate the public provide chances to transform oneself by teaching others that are different. Instead, I stayed within my comfort zone and taught folks I see every day about “Nutrition in a Nutshell.” I know now that when you step outside of your comfort zone, that is when you truly begin to evolve.

writing in a different way that is often stated in typical research projects and formal writing formats like ... ahem... APA. It has made me realize that I have accomplished a lot during my time as a student both inside and outside of the classroom.

I hope you that you enjoy my reflections and accompanied artifacts of school assignments, fliers, pictures, a website, among other things. It is an ode to my time here at Fontbonne and a huge pat on the back to myself.

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### Honor thy self, self, and self

Last semester I took a special topics class called Trauma in Literature. I did not know what to expect going into the class and was pleasantly surprised at each meeting. The class was informative and insightful and gave me a new outlook on trauma. We learned about the various forms of trauma - personal, collective, and intergenerational traumas - and dissected how they were portrayed in different literary works. The portion of the class that impacted me the most was the topic and exercise on self-care.

As a society, we often find ourselves on the go with long lists of commitments on our calendars. There never seems to be enough hours in the day. I remember the evening we went over the topic of self-care in class. I was tired (as the class was in the late evening hours) and I was mentally preparing myself to go into work for an overnight shift. Earlier in the year, I made a bold decision to step down from a well-paying managerial position to focus on completing my studies. I questioned my decision many times but the endless days filled with meetings, personnel issues, short staffing, etc., left little time for myself or anyone else in my life. I had been going through the same routine for years. The combination of a heavy workload along with political shenanigans that were occurring in the workplace, left me with little choice but to make my next move.

I stepped down into an “entry” level position and almost immediately felt a huge sense of relief. I could breathe again... so I thought. The workload changed but my ability to practice adequate self-care was not present. I worked nights that sent a toll on my body, so I spent most of my “free” time sleeping. I ate when I could and exercise was nonexistent. The act of self-care was difficult despite the change in my professional work load due to a complete adjustment in

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my sleep cycle and increased school load. It was the first time in a long time that I was a full time student.

Dr. Van Dycke's presentation on self-care allowed us to examine what the words *honoring, self-care, and journey* mean to us. We then moved to outlining our ideal way of self-care, which for me included - sleep, routine exercise, relaxing without guilt, cooking, and being with family and friends. Dr. Van Dycke's class exercise gave us the opportunity to visualize how we can make time for ourselves and how saying the word "no" sometimes is a means of self-care on its own. It was great to write these ideas down and discuss it with others. This helped to validate the earlier decision I had made in making a professional shift.

I recall chatting with Dr. Van Dycke after class and thanking her for presenting the information. I told her that I knew of so many people who could benefit from hearing about self-care. Self-care is the ability to focus on our mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. It is important especially for those us who have experienced trauma in one way or another. Any helping profession including dietetics puts the focus on other people. In order to successfully take care of others, it is vital that we honor ourselves first.

This particular class session helped me to put into words the need and desire to put myself first. It gave me permission to be at peace with the decision I made professionally earlier in the year. It helped me think about self-care in a new way. It has helped propel me forward with a new mindset and focus as I continue to work through my dietetics education.



Exploration



## EXPLORATION

### Siggi's contest - Winner takes all!

I received my quarterly Food and Nutrition magazine in the mail last month and flipped through it with excitement. I paused when I encountered an advertisement for a recipe contest for Siggi's yogurt. I skimmed the colorful two-page ad and moved on. A week later, I continued to think about that ad and decided with determination that I was going to enter the contest.

I had never entered a food contest, let alone tried Siggi's yogurt before, so I knew I was venturing into the unknown. I decided that this was a good opportunity to "play in my kitchen" and experiment with foods. I have spent the last five years immersed in my textbooks and working on school projects while working and trying to maintain some semblance of a social life. I wanted to enter this contest because it helped to refocus my love for food while allowing me to tap into my creative side. Plus, I thought, what is the worst that can happen?

The last two semesters I have worked on preparing and applying to internships. I had to recognize and refine my specific goals and trembled when I could not narrow them all down. All I knew was that I wanted to be a dietitian and that I wanted to help people. When I dissected my thoughts and narrowed in to why I wanted to enter the dietetic profession, I realized that I long for the world of functional nutrition, and want to be able to spend time with people in a kitchen while creating foods together.

I noticed that the people who had won the previous food contests shown in the magazine are dietitians. There were no students listed as winners, however, this did not deter me from embracing the challenge. I liked playing by my own rules and developing a recipe without the confines of a class rubric or the pressures of a grade. As I developed and experimented in my kitchen, I relied on my nutrition knowledge base and recalled my times in the "lab" aka kitchen

*Artifact - final picture for contest submission + one behind the scenes photo from shoot*

## EXPLORATION

at school. Was the plate appealing? Was it colorful? How were the textures? How were the flavor components? Was it tasty?

The contest called to use Siggi's plain yogurt in a recipe with no sugar or additives. It emphasized natural ingredients. I created a yogurt sauce with fresh garlic, turmeric, cumin, cayenne pepper, and honey for top baked salmon. The salmon topped a bed of red cabbage with a side of steamed asparagus. My husband critiqued the dish and gave it his nod of approval.

I collaborated with friends over wine and they graciously agreed to take pictures of my dish. We took it seriously and played with different camera shots for a few hours. It was great fun and got me thinking about entrepreneurship and blogging in the world of dietetics. It was never a consideration in the past but now it is, if even for a hobby. This contest gave me the chance to apply my education and skills on something just for pure competitive enjoyment. It also allowed me to put myself out there for the "world" to see. I could promote my belief in the importance of good nutritious food. As my formal nutrition education comes to an end, I feel that I have the confidence and food knowledge to continue to push forward into the world of dietetics.

*Artifact - final picture for contest submission + one behind the scenes photo from shoot*

## EXPLORATION

### Bloody Mary's, Playgrounds, and Produce

I decided to spend two weeks one summer taking the class "St. Louis in Text" because it gave me a further glimpse into the city that I have lived in for so long. I loved it! I grew up in a faraway land, so this gave me a deeper appreciation for a place I have called home for most of my adult life. My final project for this history class was to research any St. Louis spot. I immediately chose the Soulard Farmers Market and immersed myself in history texts at the Missouri Historical Research Library. I discovered old Soulard magazines, maps, and newspaper articles about the long established market. The history there is still rich and visible in the present day. The main hall that houses a butcher shop, bakery, and flower shop remain standing from days past. The architecture and old signage on the walls flaunts the building's age to visitors. Fleur-de-leis are sprinkled throughout the stalls of the market that demonstrate a nod to the French influences.

Soulard Farmers Market is a common local place that people have been visiting for many decades. There are so many different and diverse visitors. It's not uncommon to find a family with small children on a Saturday morning shopping for fresh fruits and vegetables. They often then hop to the nearby playground to enjoy the day. Young couples often stop at Julia Soulard's cafe for a famous Bloody Mary and listen to music on the market patio. Individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds including Bosnian, African American, Chinese, and Indian are shopping for the best deal on produce, meat, and breads. The spice shop is crammed with a rainbow of people selecting for what will season their foods best. Perhaps this is why I love this place. Maybe this is why I'm continually drawn to it. The collection of various people of different ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds for a common thing - food - simply makes my heart sing.

*Artifact - St. Louis in text final research paper*

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The initial reason I chose this topic is that I love farmers markets. I always make it a point to discover new ones when visiting new places. It only made sense to choose a place to research that ‘called to me.’ I later realized that I wanted... no, I needed to make the connection to the dietetics field and what I have been going to school for such a long time. Plus, I have a general love for all things food related and it personally connected to me.

I visited the market on a day when it was not open prior to writing my history paper. I wanted to take pictures and see the space without the crowd. It was an old empty shell and I was able to notice things I had not before. I noticed that Julia Cerre Soulard, the original founder, has a cafe named in her honor located in the market. A street with her name also runs parallel to the market. There are resemblances to the French Market in New Orleans throughout the stalls and banners with family farm names that date back to the 1800s. The history is abundant and it only made me appreciate it more.

Growing up in Guam, I remember visiting flea markets with my mother. This is what they called ‘farmers markets’ back home. I remember the endless rows of mangoes, local purple yams, and native tangerines, yet I did not appreciate my visits to the produce stalls then. It is only now that I recognize the value in obtaining local produce directly from the farmer. Now I appreciate the hard work that goes into what it takes to grow food. It is now that I miss the produce from home that I cannot obtain here.

I wonder how other farmers markets compare to Soulard and maybe this is why I make it my mission to visit markets when I travel. I am curious to know if there is anything different we can do to enhance them; any innovative things they are doing to entice visitors. I envision bigger and brighter things for the Soulard Farmers Market. I wish for nutrition education that uses

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produce from the market. I can foresee visitors taking part in area walking tours of the market and the Soulard area as a whole. I can imagine food demonstrations for the general public.

I believe making a connection to the local history of neighborhoods and specific places can help us understand why we are continually drawn to visiting them. The market's location is sandwiched between a decrepit area and nice housing and businesses in Soulard. I wonder where the visitors come from. Who are these farmers who decided to sell their goods? There are so many different people who visit the market - their stories make me wonder. My newfound appreciation for this place comes from the research I did for the St. Louis in Text class project and simply spending time among the people and fresh produce at the Soulard Farmers Market.

A decorative border of purple dots surrounds the word "Leadership". The dots are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape with rounded corners, with a slightly larger gap on the left side. The word "Leadership" is written in a light blue, cursive font in the center of the border.

Leadership

## LEADERSHIP

### Selena's Speakeasy Dinner Event

The Dinner with 12 Griffins assignment began as a four-person team project and ended up as a partnership with another classmate. The Dinner with 12 Griffins brings together current students and alumni for an evening of networking and discussion. With many components to the project, I knew that I was going to need to get a head start. I brainstormed ideas, created charts with assigned tasks, and started multiple conversations early in the semester only to hear the birds chirping and the Jeopardy theme song playing as the emails and texts went unanswered. I knew off the bat that I was going to have to take the lead in managing our project and keeping us on track.

This hefty project was part of the Quantity foods class. I was already struggling with my full course load, which was my first in over a decade. I was also working nights full time. I was tired...all.of.the.time. Keeping on task was important and it was crucial that I did well in my classes with impending internship applications coming up. Perhaps the need to take the lead was from years of experience in a managerial role or simply being a touch older than my classmates. All I knew was I needed to get good grades and leave a lasting impression with the clients we would be serving.

As the semester progressed and the project date approached, my excessive text message reminders and "hey, let's work on this" chats in class finally paid off. My partner and I were finally able to lock in specific times to work on different elements of the project. When we eventually started working, to my pleasant surprise, my partner was amazing! She excelled at determining the numbers and budget for our project where I leaned into the creative side by making the décor, and testing and adjusting the recipe we were going to serve. Our strengths complemented each other to get the job done.

*Artifact - Menu and Production sheet*

## LEADERSHIP

We had our challenges though. Our ability to adapt to a situation was called into question when our planned dinner event was cancelled due to severe snow accumulation. We rescheduled and moved forward. I recall becoming nervous the night before and then remembered all of the times I have hosted meals in my home. “I can do this!” I told myself. I embraced my confidence and saw the project through. The event proved to be a success and my experienced food service partner rocked it out! Where I lead the organization of the kitchen and implementation of meal preparation, she maintained control of the front of the house and ensured that guests received what they needed.

I really came to like and appreciate the Quantity foods class. I loved the creative aspect of developing a menu, testing recipes, and decorating an environment to capture an ambiance that your event goers will hopefully enjoy. I hadn't really thought about the creative aspects of the dietetics field, and this experience reinforced my already strong desire to enter the dietetics profession. The Speakeasy dinner themed event was a big hit that night.

When I started the semester and learned of my group for this assignment, I automatically thought of myself as the leader because of my age and experience. This especially became apparent after numerous attempts at failed communications to get the ball rolling with the project. One of the downsides when having to work with people is inevitably dealing with their issues. My tolerance for excuses as an employed manager was low. I often “flexed” when needed and did not hesitate to implement disciplinary write-ups when warranted.

I assumed that the younger college student who lived in the dorms was not taking this seriously, and it was frustrating. What I learned later was my partner was dealing with significant personal struggles, and she was finding it hard to navigate life and school. Assumptions are hard



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to put aside sometimes, however, it is necessary. I am happy to have been wrong to assume she was someone who did not care about a class project.

When the stakes are high, which in this case they were, (a meal for twelve individuals that was paid for by a client and a class grade), the expectations to do a job well done are elevated. The field of dietetics means you are working with clients all of the time, and there is no room for error when it comes to someone's health. The element of leadership is present in the field because you have to coach and guide someone through their diet and healthy living. It means collaborating with others to work towards a common goal, being a good listener, discarding assumptions, and being open to making mistakes.

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### Yum, yum in the tumtum – Chicken pot pie cupcakes

I was excited for the experimental foods class partly because I wanted to get back into the kitchen and partly because I like to play with food. I decided early on that I wanted to focus on an older target population for the semester long project. I partnered with another classmate and we decided together to explore the nostalgic chicken pot pie recipe. We geared our assignment to older adults diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease because it was a topic we both had experiences with - we were already connected to it. I felt passionately about the subject having seen several individuals suffer and pass away from complications of the disease.

Food is something that should always be enjoyed, so reflecting on individuals who have difficulty eating is hard. I contemplated a multitude of questions: What if you couldn't independently feed yourself anymore? How would you feel? What if you couldn't eat your favorite foods because you had difficulty chewing? Would you be despondent? It's one of those things you may not understand until you or someone you love experiences it.

Moments of the project were frustrating and difficult. It was not because of the workload or project itself but because I worked with an unfamiliar partner who had a very different learning and work style. I like to think that I am easily adaptable to situations and people but this semester long project challenged me in ways I was not used to. She had a need for speed; I had the need for quality. She aimed to finish work as soon as possible, where I needed to process, think, analyze, and review information. We were on different wavelengths that did not always balance out. I found that I was more assertive and expressed thoughts and concerns more readily, whereas she ran with the tasks full speed ahead. I respectively took my time with different aspects of the assignments and leaned on our professor as a sounding board always with my partner present. This process seemed to help us navigate the project while adhering to our

*Artifact - recipe and Academic Exhibition picture*

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different styles. Splitting the large project up into a variety of tasks, creating a list of assigned responsibilities, and continuous check-ins with one another helped to ensure we were on the same page.

Though our approaches to the project were different, we had a lot in common. We both had a dedicated work ethic with the same goal in mind - an A for the semester. I volunteered to take the lead of merging our research together in our final paper. It was not an easy feat to blend two different writing styles with one another but it had to be done. Academically - I would rather take an exam than write a paper, so this task was daunting. I visited the academic writing instructor and received harsh criticism for our work just moments prior to presenting our information to the class, but another set of eyes on the 20-page paper was needed and necessary. The final days prior to submitting our completed project came with a lot of exchanged text messages, phone calls, and emails to ensure we had everything to our satisfaction. When we turned it in, we both sat back and were relieved. We could finally relax.

Overall, the project was a success, and I am still hugely proud of the work we did. I can whip up a batch of chicken pot pie cupcakes in no time! I was so proud of the work that we did that I ended up presenting the information again during Fontbonne's Academic Exhibition in 2018. I pushed myself to apply to present the information because it was a step out of my comfort zone. I wanted to share the data that we worked so hard to gather and felt passionately about.

If granted the time and resources, I'd love to modify this recipe further to focus on the nutritional component. Perhaps add more protein and spices to enhance healing properties. I'd also love the opportunity to take this to actual people (not that my classmates were not good taste

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testers) who could benefit from this. An additional goal would be to target others who could benefit such as those with Parkinson's and those who have experienced strokes.

The leadership role during this project alternated throughout different aspects of the assignment. She took the lead with getting a jump-start on the PowerPoint presentation, gathering pictures, and starting the recipes in the kitchen. I checked for quality and merged our research together. We both adjusted and analyzed the data that we gathered and collectively agreed upon how we would move forward. This project taught me a lot about the collaboration process and that to be an effective team player and leader one should always be flexible and willing to advocate for their work.



Occupation

## OCCUPATION

### MyPlate or yours?

During my first initial semesters at Fontbonne, I balanced a professional role of being both an Active Living Coordinator and Residential Coordinator. This meant that I organized and hosted classes for individuals who are retired while maintaining my everyday responsibilities as a coordinator for four group homes. It was hard and exhausting work but the Active Living position gave me a fresh break from the day-to-day fires that I consistently had to put out in the residential department.

As the Active Living Coordinator, I was given a lot of flexibility with organizing classes for retirees. This is where I came up with the idea to develop a mini-series on nutrition. I felt that I needed to insert my love for food into the list of classes and share it with others. Healthy eating habits can always be a topic of discussion. In creating and brainstorming ideas for Active Living classes, I knew that I had to keep things simple. I had to think about the individuals who would participate and their cognitive abilities. Many of these individuals I knew personally, so I figured it would be a piece of cake.

Upon the first class of the nutrition mini-series where we learned about MyPlate, I realized how wrong I was to simplify the information. It was all too elementary. I asked what the food groups were and people shouted them out. We played a game of food bingo that was fun but the overall message of food group education was ultimately pointless because they knew the information already. In reflecting about the first initial class, I realized that I needed to break any assumptions I had of what I think people already know or don't know. I needed to challenge them as I wanted to be challenged, disability or not.

I could have easily delegated the task of leading the nutrition class to someone else, but I wanted the control. After all, I was the one going to school for it. Though the extra work of

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hosting and creating a mini-series was beyond my scope of responsibilities, I realized that I relished in being creative and needed the outlet to be inventive with setting up classes and coming up with materials to share. I now recognize that the individuals in the class should have played more of a part in developing the content of the class in order to fully be invested in the material. I came up with ideas of what I thought was important information but it may have not been necessarily what they wanted to learn. I should have asked more questions to assess what they wanted to learn about as it pertained to nutrition. This gave me the reality check that I am not always right.

I realize now that I had an urge to control this class because it was on food and nutrition topics, which is something I feel is important for others to embrace. My need to manage this project and the topic of nutrition prevented me from assessing the audiences' needs. I envisioned myself as the "expert" without fully being the expert in how to develop and implement class curriculum.

I enjoyed creating the nutrition mini-series and believe the attendees had a great time. I initiated a survey at the end of the series and received positive feedback. I realized though the importance of taking a step back to discern what audiences are interested in learning about, not just gratifying my own interests. I was so excited to share my nutrition knowledge of the food groups, reading labels, and hydration that I did not think about what others wanted to learn. I tailored the lessons to my wants and not theirs. In the future, I can initiate the audiences' lead with a pre-survey, or questionnaire, or simply ask what is wanted.

*Artifact - survey results and flier*

## OCCUPATION

Room service, May I take your order?

When I realized I would be graduating soon I went into a panic. I knew that I would be applying for internships and that hospital experience is an asset on a dietetics resume. I immediately sought out opportunities to gain experience in a hospital's diet office because this would give me a greater chance of landing an internship. A classmate gave me the "in" at St. Luke's Hospital, and I went on my first interview in over a decade. I learned that I landed the job after a week.

I realized after my first few weeks as the "new girl" that an as needed PRN position meant that you were needed all of the time. I floated back and forth between delivering patient trays, to taking patient orders in the call center. I favored taking calls because this gave me the opportunity to chat with different people and to really hone in on specific diets. I was able to apply the concepts I was learning in my medical nutrition therapy classes, and draw upon the knowledge gained from my nutrition support of individuals I currently work with, into this new position. It was exciting.

I recall chatting with a woman with the last name Pickles. Pickles! She was adorable and so pleasant to speak with; even when I had to tell her that specific items did not fit her physician's ordered diet. Even though she was spending her days in the hospital, she had such a positive demeanor. If only everyone had her energy and attitude.

My least favorite part of the job was delivering patient trays. After working at my full time job, and attending classes, being on my feet was the last thing I wanted to do, but I had to find the unseen benefit. I created a mental game by aiming to beat my Fitbit steps each shift and even sought out different routes to explore in the hospital. I realized that most people do not want to be in the hospital and there are very few times where hospitalizations are happy, momentous

*Artifact - Work schedule and Picture of work badge*



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occasions. My favorite moments came when I was assigned to the labor and delivery floor. I saw new babies, new parents, and happy families. It was great.

My most challenging time came at the end of each shift. I, along with my co-workers, had the pleasure of collecting the hospital's dirty dishes and ensuring they were washed and stocked for the breakfast run in the morning. It was a dirty gross job, but a necessary one. I learned quickly the importance of teamwork in order to efficiently deliver quality food to patients within a specific timeframe, and to ensure safe sanitation practices in the dish room. Some of us scraped the dirty dishes while others loaded and unloaded the industrial sized dishwasher. It took us all working together to ensure we got off at a reasonable hour. You learned quickly who was your weakest link and gently nudged them to work harder.

After a few short months of being at the hospital, I realized my expectations of the job were higher than I anticipated. I thought I would be working alongside dietitians and would spend more time chatting with patients about their food orders, but I was essentially a waitress in a hospital setting. I was the low man on the totem pole. I did not expect the nightmare of a dish room, cleaning up after patients, and grumpy overworked employees. I wondered how anyone could do it as a full time job, yet so many did.

As long as there are patients in a hospital, the work of a hospital kitchen is never ending. This work goes on behind the scenes and often goes unnoticed. The tasks are not hard and it does not take a lot of education to complete, however, it is necessary and important. The employees who ran the production line, worked the diet office call center, and delivered trays came from different backgrounds, were different ages, and had different education levels. Some were high school students while others were middle-aged adults simply trying to make a living.

*Artifact - Work schedule and Picture of work badge*

## OCCUPATION

In addition to the work itself, I noticed a common theme in the kitchen. Many of the employees were from minority backgrounds. For example, Ms. Lena is an African American woman in her mid-60s and works at a local high school. She has many years of experience leading a kitchen. Rosa at the hospital is a middle- aged Hispanic woman who was working towards obtaining her certified nursing assistant certification while working full time. Fatima, an observant Muslim, works full time delivering trays at the hospital while taking care of her family.

My time at St. Luke's Hospital made me appreciate the hard work that goes into creating and delivering a meal to someone who is sick in the hospital. I came to really appreciate this work when I started my school service practicum rotation at Webster Groves High School. The dish room was not as daunting and the kids came to you for food instead of the other way around. Though I did not care for the job itself, I came to appreciate its value and importance. Kudos to those who love and enjoy this work. I realize now, it simply is not for me.



Service +

Social Justice

## SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### Storm Survival in St. Louis Quick Tip #1: Stock Up on Bread and Milk.

The Dietetics department does an excellent job of communicating volunteer opportunities in the St. Louis community. As a good way to network, build my resume, and gain some experience in the field, I decided to participate in a grocery store tour for two years in a row hosted by Operation Food Search (OFS). These tours took place in Schnucks grocery stores located in low-income St. Louis neighborhoods. One year I was assigned to converse with customers about dairy products in the milk and yogurt aisle, and the next I was stationed in the bread section where I talked about whole grains. I never spoke so much about milk and bread in my life!

I decided to participate in these two volunteer opportunities because it allowed me to practice my skills of talking to individuals about nutrition. I have a lot of confidence in my communication skills in my employment in social services and working with individuals with intellectual disabilities. The world of science-based nutrition was new, and I wanted to make sure I was communicating accurate information. My confidence was not at the same level as it is with work, so I wanted to challenge myself to strengthen my abilities to preach the word of dairy and whole grains to the community.

I was surprised to recognize that there is so much that I already knew that many others did not. This just comes simply from continuous education about food and nutrition. Though I was talking about the very basics of whole grains and dairy products, I acknowledge that there is still so much to learn. Who knew that adding molasses to some wheat breads makes it brown without a single ounce of whole grain? My gosh, there is so much sugar in yogurt!

As part of the tour, OFS offered a \$10 gift card incentive for the participants who visited all of the different stations: dairy, bread, protein, produce, etc. Once I had my talking points

*Artifacts - pictures and OFS talking points*

## SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

down, I thoroughly enjoyed the tours as it gave me the opportunity to chat with so many different people from all walks of life. Many people were excited to learn new information at the dairy and whole grains stations I was located, while others simply wanted to get it over with in order to receive their gift card. Some folks challenged me with different nutrition questions. Others agreed wholeheartedly about the health benefits of whole grains and chatted about their personal health struggles to then turn around and pick out a loaf of white bread. This was everything we just discussed! I thought about this and was a little peeved, but then soon realized that all behavior change comes with time, and money is always a factor. Healthier whole grain bread is more expensive than white bread. A person who knows what is healthier to consume, may not have the means to splurge on whole wheat bread.

I remember driving home after the first grocery tour was over. I was in an area of north St. Louis I was not very familiar with and had not learned the magic of my phone's GPS. When I reached a part of town I recognized, I called my husband to let him know I would be home soon. I remember telling him that I was driving on the exact same street that quickly went from a crummy neighborhood with abandoned buildings to mansions and gated communities. He told me, "That's St. Louis for you." I was amazed. Here I was driving in a part of St. Louis I was not familiar with, admiring old, but dilapidated architecture, to then realizing I was surrounded by homes I would never be able to afford in my lifetime.

I knew why OFS chose those particular Schnucks stores to host tours. It is one of many numerous underdeveloped St. Louis areas. Most residents likely come from a low socio-economic background and shop at these particular stores, of which there are not many in this area. It was not until I was driving and took notice of these homes that I realized how vast the wealth divide is in different neighborhoods, even on the same street.

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This is where I draw the line!

A few years ago, my family received scary news that my mother would need further evaluation on a mass that was discovered in one of her ovaries. I felt helpless as my mother and most of my family lives in Guam. The physicians in Guam determined that she needed further evaluation in the Philippines as they have more advanced medical technology at their hospitals. As the eldest of three siblings, I felt a great responsibility to be with my mother when she traveled to another country. I take the lead caregiver role within my family even from several thousand miles away, so this decision to travel came without hesitation. I packed my bags and traveled to Guam, and then to the Philippines.

I did not know what to expect from medical care in another country, so I was pleasantly surprised to be shuttled from the airport to our hotel room located in the hospital. This is where I really learned about the term “medical tourism.” It’s a real thing. Most of my time in the Philippines was spent in the hospital with my mother undergoing various tests and eventually surgery. I am happy to say that she is healthy and well and has since returned to the Philippines with a friend for a follow up visit and still receives a clean bill of health.

The real eye opening experience happened when I ventured out of the hospital. Sure, learning how to navigate a hospital in another country during a scary life moment was hard, but we had to get out! Prior to her surgery, my mother and I went exploring at nearby outdoor markets and stores. We were waiting in line to order food from a fast casual restaurant when I noticed a separate area and line where older individuals could go up and order their food. They did not have to wait in line. What I found was the value the people of the Philippines place on their elders and those with disabilities. This is so different from what I see here in the United States, where we pay a lot of lip service to “respecting our elders,” but in reality, we often see

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them as an inconvenience in our fast paced society. In the Philippines, if you are many years wise or have physical or cognitive difficulties, you are placed at the front of the line or assisted without any questions. It is automatic, and I loved it!

In thinking about this experience and reflecting back to that specific moment when I was waiting in line, I realize why I am called to work with an older population and why I am drawn to conversations with those much older than I am. There is a genuine respect and appreciation that I recognize in individuals who have lived so much longer than I have. These individuals are literal walking history books. Perhaps this is why I jumped at the opportunity to provide in home personal care for Stanley - a 98 year old man who lives down the street from my home, or why I thoroughly enjoyed chatting with seniors at a community nutrition presentation at the Ferguson community center.

In my preparation to be a dietitian, I have worked with older populations, and will continue to do when I practice. The baby boomers need us! We should approach others, especially those older than us, with respect. An empathetic perspective is needed, as our loved ones, and ourselves, will one day be in their shoes. One day it could be your mother who is aging and needs support with nutrition supplements because she has a poor appetite. Perhaps your grandmother suffered from a stroke and now needs help with being fed. Wouldn't you want her to be treated with the respect she deserves?

The Family and Consumer Sciences' Body of Knowledge and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics emphasizes the need for a global nutrition approach with respect to diverse populations. A shift in cultural attitudes regarding senior individuals and those with disabilities is needed in not only the world of dietetics, but also the world as a whole.