Kristi Powers December 1, 2009

Reflective Essay Professor Coppola

**Reflective Essay**

During the past seven weeks our computer class has been visiting the United Hebrew Geriatric Center in New Rochelle. I will say I had my fair share of hesitations going into this project but I’m sure the older adults did as well. Although we were there to teach the older adults, we weren’t the only ones doing the teaching. While we were teaching them how to use the computer, they managed to teach us through experience. I learned how to become a better teacher as well as how to change my teaching techniques to better suite older adults. The older adults also showed me that I was wrong in my hesitations and that teaching older adults is a lot more fun than it sounds. It’s a very rewarding experience being able to help these older adults and observe how happy they become when they achieve their goals.

My older adult student was Rose Zair. On the first day of classes she was very doubtful in her ability to use the mouse, but by the end of the course you would’ve thought it was a different person working the computer. The “mouserobics” was really helpful in getting them used to how the mouse moves and operates. After learning the mouse and becoming familiar with the keyboard, Rose was actually very impressive. I’ll admit I was a little nervous at first just thinking about having to teach a stranger, but Rose was so much fun and always excited for our visits that it made teaching her very easy. Rose was a quick study and after only a class or two of getting used to the mouse, she readily moved on to learning about the internet. Most of the older adults, Rose included, especially wanted to learn how to use e-mail so that they could keep in touch with various family members that they don’t have the opportunity to interact with. It was a pleasing experience to see the smile on Rose’s face when she checked her e-mail the next visit and realized she had received an e-mail from me. It was gratifying to know that I could impact her life in such a way after only knowing her for a few weeks.

Over the course of the eight weeks that we visited the United Hebrew Geriatric Center it was easy to see that as the weeks went by, the adults and students; myself included; were becoming more and more engaged. As Rose was able to practice, she improved each week and I could tell that I was slowly changing her mind about computers. At first she didn’t think there was a reason for her to learn about computers because she never really wanted one and thought she wasn’t any good at using one, but the course at UGHC swayed her opinion greatly. It was obvious that by the end of the course she was actually interested in computers and enjoyed using them so much that she wanted one of her own. It was also enjoyable to see that even though the students are “older adults”, they can still act like us and joke around with us as if they were our age. My student, Rose had a cousin that was in our same group in the Independent Living facility and they made it almost like a competition because each week Rose wanted to be able to do what her cousin was doing to prove how well she’s improved. The students at UHGC, weather they realized it or not, had a significant impact on my life and the way I view older adults. I learned how to use positive reinforcement to help teach and keep the students interested when they were frustrated and wanted to give up. In addition, I learned how to be more precise with my wording when trying to explain something because things that are second nature to me aren’t necessarily for the other people. This class was great experience and I’m glad it proved my hesitations wrong.