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CIS 102T

Final Reflections Paper

After these last few weeks I have gained something in a class meant to give back to the older adults of our society. I gained a new respect for the elderly people who take care of themselves even as their health starts to decline, and a respect for those who speak out against injustice. I met two wonderful women who were very different but both strong in their own ways. I met Haralyn Turchin who although had already enrolled in a computer class before, she had realized there was always more to learn. She taught me that there are still many elderly people with minds sharp and full of wit. She made me realize the problems some of the people living in assisted living encounter. She told me about how she had to deal with people trying to coerce her into spending more money and sometimes treating her poorly. She had to deal with problems in her apartments that needed to be fixed but she felt her voice fell on deaf ears, and there were times where she had been served burned food or pieces so tough she had to send it back and wait even longer for something new. Throughout the time I spent with her we worked on typing a list of complaints to the Hallmark about her room and enabled her to buy clothing online so that her limited mobility wouldn’t get in the way of her looking sharp as well. We also spent a lot of time enabling her to look up her stocks online to see how they were doing and looked up financial reports for her to read. She was an amazing woman who taught me not to underestimate someone because of their age, I feel far too often people use that saying in regards to the very young but that saying can apply in all age situations.

My other student was Ruth Berkman, a kind old lady who would have fit most people’s stereotypical definition of a cat lady, she loved cats, had cat paraphernalia all over her house, and would croon on for hours over her first cat who had passed away. But beneath that label that people would be so quick to place on her, was a very kind and caring women. She told me about her work as a kindergarten teacher for over 50 years and how her only pride and joy besides her cats, was her niece. Her niece had married and moved to India, she sent pictures but Ruth had been unable to find them on her computer. I showed Ruth how to not only find her niece’s wedding photos, but pictures of her as a baby as well. I had a great time showing Ruth about how her laptop could enable her to do things she had not done before. I taught her how to look up reviews for a Broadway show she wanted to see in the New York Times online. I showed her how her internet works and why it wouldn’t turn on if she had the wireless button turned off. I spent weeks with Ruth building up her confidence to be able to face the computer on her own so that when I left I hoped she would be able to empower herself. I had many calls from Ruth over the time we spent together asking me how something worked and I was always happy to give an explanation or help her out.

I don’t quite know if I can really articulate into words what working with these two seniors has meant to me, and to them as well. This whole experience has definitely taught me not to judge people based on appearances, as cliché as that is I think we all often fall prey to doing so even when we know we shouldn’t. What I taught these women besides the little things like bookmarking a webpage, Microsoft word, or how their email works. I taught them how to do things for themselves, how to look up things on Google, how to use the printer, and how to change the ink cartridge, how to look up stocks, how to access their bank accounts online, and how to shop for themselves. But none of that is as important as instilling in them a sense of pride at what they accomplished, that the computers shouldn’t be an obstacle to overcome. What I wanted to show them that computers and technology are wonderful tools, and that all of their wisdom and experience from life is far more important than them not being able to right click the mouse on the first try. I wanted these women to be able enjoy the things the 21st century had to offer them; I didn’t want them to feel embarrassed anymore if a younger relative mentioned technological terms they did not understand. This class did end up being a lot more than what I expected but I would not have had it any other way. When we said our goodbyes at that stage I really meant everything I said about these two women, their growth was tremendous, and even though we had our good days and bad days hearing them tell me about the things they tried to learn on their own never failed to inspire a sense of pride in me for what they can do.