Reflections Paper

By:

Rhea Duggal

This semester has been amazing adventure for me, especially having the opportunity to be a part of this learning experience. Helping elderly people learn to use the computer at the Hallmark Center, in the most amazing city in the world (NYC) is a blessing in itself. Given this opportunity, I was able to learn things about myself that I never knew existed within me, as well learn about a whole different generation of people. I had previously worked with elderly people, but not like this. This was fun, intellectual, and fulfilling in so many ways. My student did not know one thing about a computer, so we had to start from the very beginning, which is learning how to turn a computer on and off. My student was ready to learn everything, and she always came prepared with questions. It felt accomplishing to be able to teach to others, I’ve never been put in a position such as that.

My student, Kitty Hartwig was the absolute best. I couldn’t of asked for a better student. She was so knowledgeable on her own; I felt that I was getting so much more out of this experience just by being in her presence, and being able to hear her stories. After getting familiarized with the computer in the first couple of weeks, we were able to start doing routine procedures such as checking and sending emails. She wasn’t familiar with email, but was eager to learn; this was just another way for to communicate with her children. She would always tell me she prefers to talk with them over the phone, so I tried showing her different ways over the computer to talk, chat, and visually connect with one another by teaching her to use Skype. That was a fun experience. I remember the first time we connected with her son over Skype, her eyes lit up like no other. She only got to see her children once every two weeks because of the commute, but now because of Skype, she was able to see and talk her children every day. This had to of been the most fulfilling experience of all with her, because it made me feel like I made a difference in her life, which will make any teacher feel good on the inside.

As weeks went by, my visits with Kitty just got better and better for me and her. I was able to teach her so much, and I loved that she was enthusiastic to learn. It was appealing to compare my interests about the computer with Kitty’s interests. People in my generation enjoy using Facebook, whereas when I told Kitty about Facebook she was not interested at all. I helped her create an account on Facebook and showed her the ropes, so to speak, but after that first attempt on Facebook, we never revisited it again. Kitty was more interested in researching the web, and I was ready to show her how I researched. I particularly love bargain shopping and ironically so did Kitty. She would tell me stories about shopping over the television, and calling in to buy neat things. That really excited me, because I knew I would be able to show her something that I enjoy doing, which is shopping for things on sale. I showed her all different websites like Groupon.com, LivingSocial.com, Deal On.com, Restaurant.com and so many more and she absolutely loved it. She and I were very similar in that we believe if we can save money at any cost, than we will do that. She enjoyed it so much, that every lesson we looked over the bargain sites and did a little shopping of our own. I know that she will take the knowledge I gave her on bargain shopping, and keep it for the long run.

If I had any advice to give, I would tell others who are ready to teach elderlies to be prepared. As a teacher you need to learn to adjust to the student by being patient, and you need to learn to enjoy the experience for what it is. My student in particular didn’t know anything at all about a computer, but with the patience I have and the simple teaching methods I used, I was able to get very far in an accelerated speed with her. My second advice, would be to always come prepared. Come in ready to answer last weeks questions, as well as a set plan and schedule on what you want to teach your student. The last thing you’d want to happen is to just sit in front of the computer and run out of things to teach your student because you were unprepared. Although an hour with an elderly person may seem like forever, in reality it goes by so quickly; you know what they say, time flies when your having fun. Not every teacher will have a student as great as Kitty, but as a teacher you have the opportunity to help change someone’s life even if it’s the minimal like teaching someone how to use email. Overall, your doing a great deed for yourself as well for your student, and it’s the simplest things in life that brings inner happiness to people.