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College Reading and Writing

Volunteer Essay

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Just Giving the Basics

“The women here don’t need or want anything fancy. They don’t want products that will stop wrinkles from forming or products that make their hair shiny, all they really want is the basics.” I sat silent for a few seconds to let Nicole’s statement sink in. It was clear to me that I had to wrap this phone call up quickly because the information I had received was really starting to hit me, and I was just about in tears. “Well thank you, Nicole for all of your time. I will let my associates know what items they can purchase and I will be in contact with you regarding when I should deliver the gifts.”

“Thank you too, Emily. I don’t know if you realize how much this will mean to the women at the shelter. It will truly be a Mother’s Day they will never forget.”

When I first got hired as the Customer Sales Lead at Bath and Body Works I never thought it would be a “life-altering” experience. And I was right. For four months it was just a job. A job that I would work thirty hours a week and still try and keep up with school, curse it when it went poorly and praise it when it was going well, a job that paid me money. But most importantly, it was a job where I just did the basics. I would

demo lotion on customers until my hands were so slick I couldn't hold a pen and I would make enough money each segment to keep our District Manager happy. I wasn't passionate about my job, but I did it and I did it well.

On April 5th my manager gave me my new Division of Responsibility or D.O.R in Bath and Body Works lingo. My D.O.R. was to head Limited Brand's Adopt-a-Mom program. I opened up the packet and began reading. In a nut-shell, I had to call a local women's shelter and ask if, as Bath and Body Works employees, we could donate gifts to a shelter for the battered women in honor of Mother's Day.

I looked through the phone book and found the Cedar Valley Friends of the Family organization. C.V.F.F. is a non-profit organization that is based upon crisis intervention and prevention. They were founded by volunteers and are still run today by mainly volunteers. C.V.F.F. has many programs to offer our community, but their main focus is on battered women. They have an eight-room "safe house" that women and their children and come to if they are coming from an abusive spouse or significant other, or if they need to get back on their feet after a terrible divorce.

I called C.V.F.F. and was directed to Nicole. Nicole works at C.V.F.F. and was very delighted that a big company like Bath and Body Works was interested in helping them out. She compiled a list of items the B.B.W. employees could purchase for the women at the shelter. When she was reading off the list of items, I was very surprised that the women did not ask for anything big or expensive. They didn't want Frederic Fekkai shampoo, Patricia Wexler face care products, or brand new clothes. They wanted

things like black mascara for job interviews, a purse sized planner to write down court dates, and lufas to wash themselves with.

Nicole explained to me that many of the women leave their homes in the middle of the night to get away from their abusive partner. Often times they grab things for their children but not themselves. They needed the necessities, the things you and I use every single day.

I am proud to say that I have gotten my associates excited about donating items to the shelter. My manager said that in the past, they have tried to have associates donate things for a good cause and they weren't very responsive. I shared the women's stories with my employees and I believe it really touched them. I told them my new favorite quote, "You may not be able to change the whole world, but you can certainly change your little corner of it."

On May 5th I will deliver the gifts that we collected and I cannot wait to see the look on the women's faces. The women at C.V.F.F. have been through a lot in their lives, and they don't want anything too fancy or special. The employees at Bath and Body Works are trained to point out over the top, and elaborate gifts, filled with luxurious smelling bath salts and lotion. This time, however, we will be trained to just give the basics.