**AIDS FOR FRIEND**

Your Name (First M. Last)

School or Institution Name (University at Place or Town, State)

**Service Agency Identification**

Aid for friends is an organization founded by Rita Ungaro with an aim to alleviate the issue of hunger, poverty and isolation of the old home bound population that lives in Philadelphia. This agency has huge number of volunteers that that visit the clients as friends and provide them home cooked meals free of charge. These volunteers also spare some time and talk to clients on each visit. Other than food older citizens have other unmet needs that threaten their existence, i.e. disabled need caregivers, they need essential home items like toasters, ovens and human affection especially on important occasions like birthdays and Christmas. Aid for friends addresses all these needs.

Population served through this program consists of older citizens who are in dire need of help due to their poverty, loneliness, disability and age. According to statistics 13,000 older citizens need help in preparing their meals; 73% from this number lives all alone and 40% can’t even leave their homes. Volunteers at AFF prepare around 300,000 dinner meals in their homes, 58,000 soups and 42,000 breakfasts to serve the need of 17,000 homes. 30% of the served population is below age 60 and 28% is above the age 85.

Rita Ungaro founder of AFF always had a kind heart for those in need. She used to serve food to the poor from her own pocket but soon she realized that serving meals by herself is not solution to this problem and she need help at larger scale to cater the needs of older poor generation. She started to talk about of this problem at public forums. In 1974 she with help of YWAC started AFF.

I have always felt helpless when I look at the poverty situation in my country. This poor population live in horrible circumstances, specially the old people. After living amazing lives in youth, many of these people live in circumstances when they don’ even have food or anyone to talk with. When I heard about this organization, I knew that I have to join it as volunteer as this is the only way for me to help such people in my small capacity. I was extremely touched by the mission of AFF and the way they practically reach a huge number of population.

**Student action and reflection page**

**Part 2 – Action -STUDENT**

I joined this organization as volunteer. I was told by the management that they want volunteers in distribution, funds collection and preparation units. I joined distribution team and preparation unit. My main task was to help my team in packaging food according to listed requirements. My team mostly consisted of new volunteers. My performance impressed the supervisor and he made me team leader. This was a unique experience that gave me sense of purpose and achievement. After two weeks I was assigned client friend that lived few blocks away from my home. Client was a 73 year old man, who was living alone and had leg problem. I used to deliver him food daily.

**Part 3 – Reflection/Commitment –STUDENT**

1. My role in this activity made me realize that life is not just about living in your own bubble but it is about helping others. This experience was life changing. This has taught me to take responsibility for my actions and to take decisions as team lead, which was a new experience for me. Now I feel more confident about decision making. Knowing that someone is depended on me has helped me to overcome my punctuality problem.
2. My client was old man who used to feel huge difficulty doing house chores as his leg was hurt from an accident. In theory, my duty was just to deliver him food and do conversation. But in spirit it was more than that. I was taught to show them compassion and ask him if he needs help with anything else. I often used to help him doing his other chores that were not exactly part of my duty description, like putting his weekly medicines in medicine box, organizing his room and side tables, making him coffee etc.
3. AFF can get huge benefit, if local citizens, especially nurses and healthcare practitioners, join the organization. Affiliation of such volunteers can bring huge quality factor in the services as many clients need special medical attention and these needs are not fully fulfilled due to lack of funding. Local government organizations should consider giving funds to this organization as it will help organization expand its service unit.
4. I plan to always stay associated with this organization as volunteer. I think my qualification as nurse is really helpful for those in need of medical assistance. My medical knowledge can help clients understand their issues better. Earning money should not be the only purpose of life, as citizen and nurse I should help needy for free to make world better place for everyone to live.

**References**