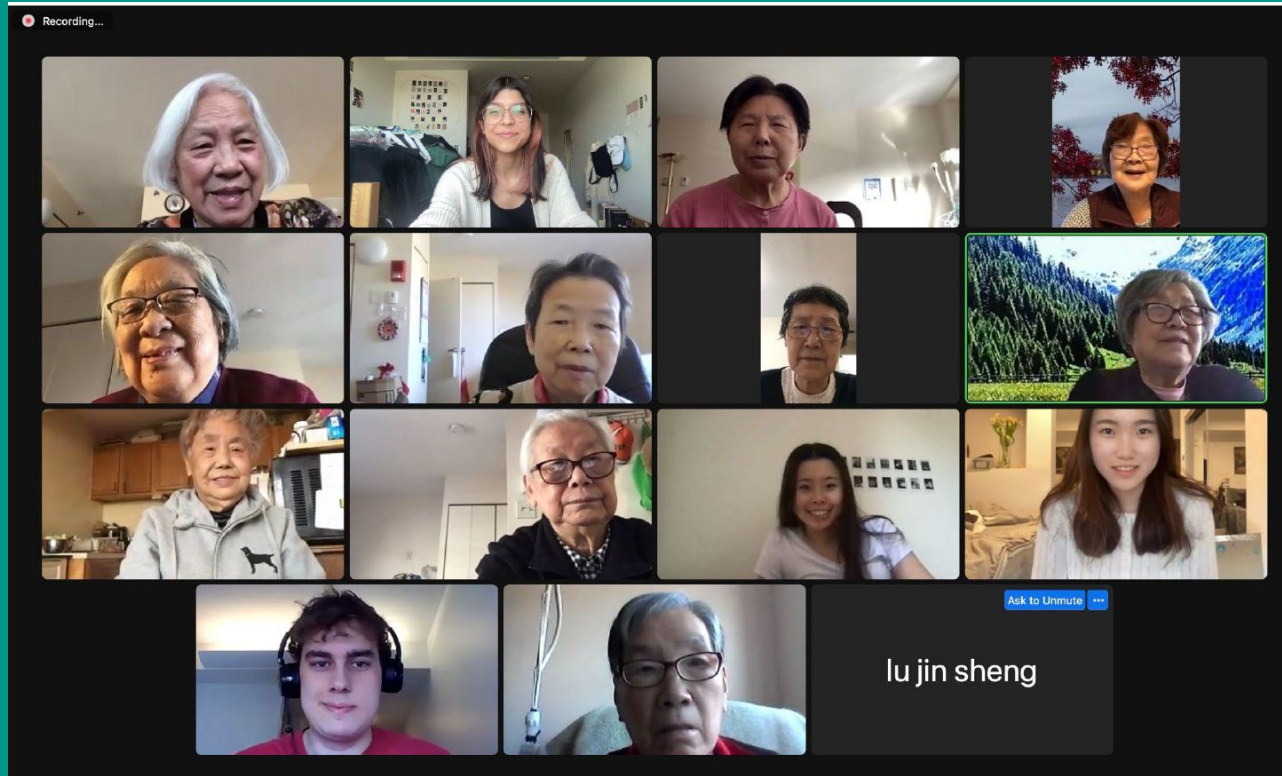




CHNS 3101 VEXPO Reflections





Morville House

Eli Avraamides

“Overall, the service-learning component of this course has been a very positive experience! One aspect of my Chinese education that I’ve always longed for more of has been immersion—taking my skills beyond a classroom setting and having meaningful interactions with native speakers. Despite my 2Life ESL class being held entirely virtual, I found it to be a great immersion experience with plenty of opportunities to expand my speaking skills. I think I’ve become noticeably more confident with speaking on the fly and using context to fill in gaps in my understanding. I’ve even gotten direct advice from my students! However, my favorite aspect of the service is helping the students learn and being able to watch their abilities grow over time. I’ve noticed many students becoming more confident and enthusiastic about the class as the weeks have gone by, and now I feel fully comfortable having casual conversations with many of them in both English and Chinese. It’s inspiring to see that these elders are still so passionate about learning and exploring new experiences at their ages. I feel incredibly fortunate to have worked with them throughout the semester, and I hope that we can make them feel the same way about us.”

Sasha Bhatia

“The best part about service for me was that I was able to create connections with some of the elders I worked with. As I was a team leader, I was leading most of the sessions and doing all the teaching - except for when we went into smaller breakout rooms. This led to all the elders knowing me and remembering things about me. They would often bring up things I had told them in previous sessions - for example: I would explain a situation in my life using the words we were teaching them so they has something to relate it to. Later they would bring it up again and ask me about that situation. It felt nice to see that I could connect with them beyond just teaching them English. I was able to form a much closer relationship with the ones who I would work with in the breakout rooms as it was three elders to a room. This way, we could have a more casual conversation and share things about our lives with each other.”

Malia Ching

“Although I have only been working with this program for a few months, I have been able to form connections with some of the seniors who I have worked consistently with. One of my favorite memories with this program was during a lesson where we talked about gardening and plants. When split into our breakout groups, I asked the seniors if they had any plants in their homes. They each enthusiastically showed their plants, ranging from cacti to poinsettias, and shared their tips for growing very healthy plants. As they proudly displayed their plants, I told them the English names of the plants, and showed them how to spell each name. When one of the seniors showed me her poinsettia plant, we laughed about the hard pronunciation and spelling of the word. The seniors' curiosity, enthusiasm, and drive to learn a new language has been very inspiring to observe and interact with each week.”

Annie Lin

“I really enjoyed working with the Morville House community this semester and fostering a strong bond between all of the team leaders as well as the elderly we were teaching. Out of the entire experience, some of my favorite memories during our weekly zoom calls included just listening to the elderly talk about their day and what they did the past weekend. Listening to them talk reminded me of how there are other communities outside of the Northeastern walls and that we should try to form connections and interact with everyone in Boston. I got to work on both my Chinese language skills and my professional skills during my time as a team leader. Of course, there were some challenges throughout the entire process – for me, balancing classes, schoolwork, work, various clubs, as well as helping to create and lead lesson plans for Morville House was very time consuming and stressful at times, but this experience helped deviate me from my normal schedule of routine and develop better time management skills as well as learn from the community members that were here before me (elders included). Overall, I’m very glad that I was able to be a part of the Morville House team this semester and it’s something that I hope to do again in the near future!”

Tiffany Truong

“My biggest takeaway from this semester in service is being able to realize how something that might seem minor to me can make someone’s day. Even though I was not able to host the weekly sessions because of my schedule, I had the chance to attend one of the sessions for around 15 minutes and seeing how enthusiastic the elderly were remains one of my favorite memories. One major challenge that I had to face however, was managing my time well and making sure that my lesson plans and presentations meet Stephenie’s weekly deadlines. Overall, I really enjoy my experience with service learning and loved working with Sasha and Annie.”

David O'Brien

"I really enjoyed my service this semester. While I have done a lot of volunteering in the past, this was really a different experience due to the fact that it forced me to communicate in a different language. What I think I learned most about myself pertained to my language ability- I had never really been thrust into a similar situation where I had to communicate in Chinese to a group of people that did not know English. This made it very challenging if I did not know how to say a certain word in Chinese since I couldn't just ask the people how to translate something. However, while it was very nerve racking doing this at first, I feel like slowly I grew used to it and began to adapt. I became more and more comfortable attempting to communicate in Chinese, and I feel like that is the main way this program helped me grow. Outside of this aspect though, I feel like this experience has also made me consider a lot about ways to effectively plan a lesson and how to structure language learning."

Sean Tseng

“I think my favorite experience has been finding new ways to pronounce english words. For example, if I am trying to teach someone how to say "throughout", I can't just say the word over and over again. I need to find breaks in the word in order to make it more digestible and rewrite it more phonetically. I also enjoy talking about how to translate words, phrases and sentences. Many times we will find that while a translation is technically correct, there could be a better way of conveying meaning. It was also fun realizing how ridiculous some words in english look like and sound like.”

Bonnie Liu

“Spending this semester in this service learning program was very helpful in teaching me how to communicate better with older adults. I don’t often interact with elderly individuals aside from my grandparents and older relatives, so this experience allowed me to be more comfortable and casual while conversing with adults of this age group. For instance, I remember that the first day of service learning, I got to engage in a pleasant conversation with a lady who was originally from Hong Kong. We got to discuss a range of topics, such as our present/past occupations, favorite places to go in Boston, and the reasons we want to learn English/Chinese. Even though she didn’t continue attending the sessions, this conversation was still memorable for me since that was when I began to feel less nervous and more natural in speaking with elderly members. Communicating in another language was a challenge in itself since my vocabulary was, from the start, very limited, but as I continued to teach the older participants, they helped me learn important words that are used colloquially and in specific contexts like discussing vocab words and grammar. This is one of the reasons why I think this service-learning experience is unique from others, as not only are we teaching the elderly participants how to learn/continue to learn something new, but they are also teaching us how to speak more fluently in their native language. It’s like a double tutoring session in both English and Chinese, which, in my opinion, made the program much more enriching and educational. I hope that I can partake in service learning programs like this in the future, and I also hope that the elderly participants continue to enjoy practicing their English as well!”