

Service learning this semester was a great experience. Our group served via Zoom and worked with Hong Lok House (HLH). This was challenging at first and I was skeptical of the format, however, I was pleasantly surprised and feel my passion, my communication skills and cultural perspective all developed during the semester. My passion for the program grew each time we met via Zoom. Because I was skeptical at first, I was hesitant and did not feel a huge connection to the group at the beginning. However, this quickly changed. Our site leader was always so bubbly and excited to greet us and we, as a group, saw the participation from the members at HLH increase with each session. My communication skills also improved throughout the semester because the format of our sessions challenged my typical or most comfortable communication strategies. There was a language barrier between our participants and our group, however, with the help of one of my classmates, I learned to count to 10 in Cantonese and felt like I could interact more with the members at HLH. Instead of relying on verbal communication which I typically do, I had to lean more on visual or expressive cues and communication. Lastly, my cultural awareness and perspective grew. My high school, growing up, was predominantly Hispanic. I really hadn't had a lot of interaction with the Chinese culture, however, this experience allowed me to learn a lot about their culture and beliefs.

In terms of the future and how I can use these newly acquired and recently developed/improved skills, I see this experience as one that has taught me two main things: to approach new and seemingly challenging situations with an open mind and that communication is not limited to strictly verbal. My skepticism at the beginning of this program prohibited me from giving it my all from the start, and I approached the first few sessions with hesitation and really sat back to figure it out. However, in the future, I hope that new and challenging situation don't change my attitude or demeanor when approaching them. I hope to remain the same positive and confident person I typically am. This can be applied to improving patient care because some cases may seem intimidating or some patients may pose challenges, but with this new experience and a new perspective on challenge, I hope to treat those patients and cases just as ones that I feel most comfortable in because I know that is when I do my best work. This is not to say I can't be skeptical or hesitant, however, those feelings create opportunities to learn and grow so I must remain optimistic in those situations. Second was my realization of how communication really does expand beyond the most typical strategy, which is just having a conversation. However, as a PT student, I know I will encounter non-verbal patients or patients that may not be strong English speakers. Service learning this semester has led me to believe that connections and relationships can still be made even when there is a language or communication barrier. This element is truly inspiring and rewarding and I look forward to learning new forms, or methods, of communication in the future.