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# Food for Thought: Thoughts on Food

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A with Honors Project  
Reflection Paper

### **Food For Thought: Thoughts on Food**

Food comes in many forms. No, I'm not talking about fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. I'm speaking of food in the form of food for the soul, mind, and community. In this A with Honors project for the Introduction to Social Work, I helped to create an instructional video for anyone who is interested in volunteering at Wesley Food Pantry at Parkland College. In this reflection paper, I will introduce Wesley Food Pantry—it's mission, need, and connection to the field of Social Work as a profession. I will apply the knowledge I learned this semester to assess how to view Wesley's work using the institutional and residual views of social welfare, and lastly I will detail shortly how the video helped the organization to meet their need.

First, what is the Wesley Food Pantry? The Wesley Food Pantry is an organization started in the basement of Wesley Church in Champaign, IL. It has been in operation since November 2006, and provides groceries, health education, and human services. The primary mission is to bring food to those in need. The pantry is set up to provide support for the third week of every month for those who may need assistance making it to the end of the month when cash assistance or paychecks are almost out. Wesley Pantry really met a large need within the community and because of the overwhelming response to the Pantry located in Wesley's basement, founders like Donna Camp, decided to expand the mission to

meet another population in need. Wesley Food Pantry at Parkland College was founded to help all those in need but with a focus on college-age students struggling to pay for rent, books, tuition, and food. Because Wesley Food Pantry at Parkland is a fairly new operation, they have many current needs.

One of those needs as expressed by Donna Camp was to have a volunteer orientation video made so that students and the general community who may want to volunteer could simply visit the Wesley Pantry website, watch the video, and be ready to volunteer. This video would be a time saver and allow more accessibility for those who are toying with the idea of volunteering. In meeting this need, two classmates and I used the discussion board on our class' Cobra website to coordinate when and where we would do filming. We contacted Donna Camp to receive samples of scripts to make sure we covered all of the areas that she felt were important for future volunteers to know. Also, our social work class had an orientation day where Donna Camp gave a presentation on Wesley and how it related to our potential future field of Social Work, and we received a tour of the facilities at Parkland. Lastly, I volunteered on a Wednesday morning so that I would have first-hand experience on how the Pantry runs when actual clients come in. In the end we were able to create a short orientation video featuring all three classmates who participated. We put the video on a jump drive to give to Donna Camp where it will be put online for future volunteers to view!

This project coincided very well with what we learned in our social work class this semester. The values, or pillars, of social work are the very same values at the heart of Wesley Food Pantry and their work in the community.

To begin, the idea of *self-determination* is even listed on the Food Pantry's website. Self-determination as defined by our textbook states that, "clients have the right to hold and express their own opinions and to act on them, as long as doing so does not infringe on the rights of others" (Zastrow 2014). Wesley Food Pantry encourages an environment that allows clients to be comfortable in choosing what they want and taking what their family needs. Also, the Generalist Social Work code of Ethics and Values states that a social worker should respect the *Spiritual and Religious beliefs* of others. Even though Wesley Food Pantry began in Wesley Church's basement, volunteers respect that the pantry is open to any and everyone. Religious values of the church are not pushed on people. In fact, to make the clients feel comfortable, religion is not mentioned unless the client brings up the topic. Other values like the *respect for the dignity and uniqueness of the individual*, *promoting social and economic justice* and *safeguarding human rights* are at the core of Wesley Food Pantry's mission.

In continuing to view Wesley Food Pantry from a social work perspective it is important look at Wesley's services from both residual and institutional views of social welfare. From the residual view, Wesley does help to fill gaps that might be left after a person has utilized all other resources. For instance, as I mentioned before, Wesley was created with an idea that around the third week of the month, money gets tight for many people. With rent due at the beginning of the month, money or food assistance are all that is left to get a person and his/her family through the rest of the month. In this way, Wesley truly acts to "fill the gap," so to speak, that other social welfare institutions do not.

Now, to look at Wesley from an institutional view, “social welfare programs are to be accepted as a proper, legitimate function of modern industrial society in helping individuals achieve self-fulfillment” (Zastrow 2014). Wesley definitely embodies these ideas. In fact, when Donna Camp came to speak to the Social Work class, she spoke to the idea that it was imperative that volunteers treat all of the clients with dignity and respect—hoping to eradicate any stigma around the idea of receiving social services.

To conclude, I have discussed what Wesley Food Pantry does as an organization. I have detailed the need that was met by the project of creating a volunteer orientation video for Wesley Food Pantry at Parkland College. Also, I have analyzed Wesley Food Pantry through a lens of social work practice and identified how this project further relates to the study of social work and how Wesley Food Pantry relates to the social work profession in practice.

Lastly, I would like to speak to how the video made this semester assisted in helping Wesley in meeting their goals as an organization. Their goals to involve more people in addressing the needs of the hungry in our community will be met in allowing more volunteers access to orientation materials. Also, the video may help reduce stigma and let people know that Wesley is a friendly, non-judgmental environment for all people. One of Wesley’s goals as listed on their website is: “to train volunteers regarding both procedures and the operational values of respect, access, and choice”. This goal in particular is what my fellow classmates and I focused on and I believe we met this goal in creating the volunteer orientation video for Wesley Food Pantry at Parkland College.

## **References**

Zastrow, Charles (2014). Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare: Empowering People (11th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.