

Joie Spier

Senior Project

Spring 2017

For my senior project this year, I completed a Service Learning project. I knew I wanted to do something with counseling when I started, but needed to find a place I could go to as an intern or volunteer. After researching a little about the Boys and Girls club I wasn't completely set on it. I was shown the job of a Child Life Specialist, so I looked at Avera McKennan and Sanford in Sioux Falls about their interning programs. What I learned was their interning programs were for students finishing college. I knew that Avera had volunteers and I knew a girl who had done it once before, so I contacted the volunteer services to see if I could do my project of volunteering with them. They agreed and I was excited to see what a Child Life Specialist did to maybe consider as a career for myself.

After deciding the volunteer would be a good project for me to do, I wrote my Statement of Intent for my project to get passed by the teachers in charge of Senior Project. At this time I also set up my wiki page. My project was passed and I put my Statement of Intent onto my wiki page. I changed colors on my wiki and chose the set up I wanted for my project. After being accepted, I contacted Leah a Child Life Specialist from Avera, about what days and hours I would be there. It was my main priority so I made sure my time was cleared for whenever she wanted me to come in.

I ended up going in two days a week, Tuesday and Thursday, and some days I went in three days and would go in on Friday as well. I was there for only three to four hours at a time

because there were lots of things going on along with doctor appointments so I wasn't needed after lunch. My day would start with arriving at nine, check in so my hours could be tracked, then head up to the Pediatrics Unit. My first day there I had my picture taken and I got my own badge to wear so I could get into the Unit without calling the nurses station!

To start interacting with the patients there I would go to Leah's office and she would have a patients list for me to look at. I would go around to every room, introduce myself, and ask them if they would like to play with me in the playroom or if they wanted me to bring toys to their rooms. There were a handful of kids that just didn't want to do anything or didn't want to leave their parents, which is understandable so I would ask them if they would like to paint or do little projects with me in their rooms. Most agreed and we had lots of fun painting bird houses and ceramic shapes such as lady bugs and butterflies. If the child did want to be in the play room we would play with the kitchen sets, toy trucks, board games, or just look at all the fish in the fish tank. I also gave a few wagon rides around the Unit too.

Throughout my days at Avera I played many games, took pictures, and interviewed families I had seen more than once when I was there. One young girl I played with the entire time that I was there and she was just so happy. Although she wasn't able to go swimming and be outside more she enjoyed being with me and loved how nice all the nurses were. She was so sad to see me leave that day and told me "you are the best nurse ever!" and that just made my day. There was also another younger boy I saw a lot and he was very shy and never wanted to leave mom, but he was perfectly content watching cartoons with me so his mom could have a break.

I learned many things while I volunteered there. I was expecting very sad children and for it to not be fun for them during their stay. I also learned that these things can be very exhausting

for the parents and other family members, so even if the child didn't want to play I would offer lots of breaks for the parents to get fresh air or even eat lunch.

After my volunteering hours were over, forty hours, I tweeted and started working more on my wiki page. When school started we got more details on deadlines. We started and finished our research papers before Christmas break. After the break I started really working on my wiki page and writing the papers that I needed to finish.

I think this project helped me out tremendously. It benefitted me because when I started I was considering doing this for my career. Although I had a great experience there, I have decided that it is something I do not want to pursue in my future. I am still interested in the psychology part of it, but not this type of work. I enjoyed completing this project because it was something I was very interested in. At first it was scary to go around and introduce myself to families, but I overcame my fear and just had fun. I believe I had a great experience with the senior project.