

Anna Mae VanDien



I began working at Good Samaritan Society-Waconia Westview Acres through sheer convenience. I had signed up as a volunteer when an open position in the therapeutic recreation department opened up. Although my employment occurred by chance, I have never been unhappy about my circumstance. I have been inspired by each resident's expression of kindness, optimism, and gratitude; that's been the specific reason I continue to work for the Westview Acres tenants and why I have chosen to focus my college studies on human relationships.

During a family vacation to Ixtapa, Mexico, my father and I paid a visit to an assisted living home funded by the local Rotary club in a nearby village. As an employee at a building with Assisted Living services, I had my expectations. However, once we entered the neighborhood, I knew the experience would be remarkably different. I could not believe the lack of sanitation, fresh water, privacy, and security. Above all, I was touched by the humanity of the volunteers and the content appreciation of each resident. This sparked me to explore social work as an educational and professional goal. I want to travel even wider in order to learn about practices throughout differing regions and countries, not only to bring these lessons back home with me and incorporate into the care I provide, but also find ways to instigate positive changes in homes such as the one I toured in Mexico.

Through social work, I hope to leave an impact through stronger familial relationships. I would like to work with entire families throughout the seasons of life because I have recognized that closer ties to family members benefit the family as a whole, as well as the community and greater society.

Each month I offer manicures to the women of Westview Acres. The service not only offers them the freedom of manicured nails that can often be lost due to restricted mobility, but also the simple joy of being pampered. The time I take to file, moisturize, and paint each lady's nails is time for each of them to relax. I know from my own experiences that women often bear the brunt of worrying, improving, and just plain keeping up. I view this monthly get together as a simple way to treat each woman in a way that they otherwise would not be appreciated. As I walk up to a full table of grinning women, I can practically see the stress melt from their limbs and their shoulders loosen. That and the soft exclamations of how pretty they feel make the job in the life enrichment department that much sweeter.

Westview Acres is literally where I've grown during the most influential years of my life, from sixteen years old to the nineteen year old I am today. Throughout the three years I have been employed at Westview Acres, I have gained more responsibility by proving my strengths in patience, efficiency, and conscientiousness, while also improving my communication and grown in my administrative skills. Much of my daily work consists of the life enrichment aspect as well as assisting with the business side of senior living. This position enables me to give residents increased one-on-one attention which would otherwise be neglected. The building as a whole has become more efficient due to my ability to adapt quickly and complete outstanding projects, thus freeing time for more pressing matters among the management staff.