

The Spirit of the Holidays

Category: Holidays

written by Lindsey Johnson | December 15, 2017

Snow is drifting down lightly outside my window, and the early-morning light is just starting to shine into my room. I am nestled in my bed, snug and content. Nothing is going to get me out of bed this morning, I think. Then my alarm goes off, and the realization that it is Thursday, that I have a more important place to be, pulls me out of the warmth of my bed. I know I am headed to a place filled with more joy than even a comfy bed can offer me.

Every Thursday morning, I participate in a program for elders with cognitive impairments, helping them to complete art projects as a way to facilitate their communication capabilities and their sense of independence. Every Thursday morning, when I arrive at their residence, I am greeted by the elders' joyous laughter floating down the hall.

The most recent session was especially dear to my heart. Our art project this day was decorating holiday ornaments with brightly colored paints. The elders were delighted to work on objects associated with pleasant memories and were excited that they would each be able to keep the ornament they'd made. As I walked around the room, I was overcome with feelings of gratitude that I was able to share in their enjoyment. These elders, who face daily struggles and are often tested to their limits, still have the capacity to find joy and warmth in a simple act like painting an ornament or socializing with the person sitting next to them.

The holiday season is a time to be grateful for what you have rather than burdened by what you don't have. This fact is easy to forget at times when daily life stressors weigh you down.

So it is in this holiday spirit that I am grateful for the opportunity to look beyond the comfort of a warm bed. I am grateful for the people who started this program—people with a capacity to look beyond themselves, with a faith that others will believe in the same mission. Most of all, I am grateful to be constantly inspired by the strength, perseverance, and humility that the elders show me—giving me the gift of knowing that troubling times are not half as strong as the human spirit.

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