

ARIZ CHANG MY TURN

# Project Humanities connects Valley's diverse communities



The clothing on our backs, the shoes on our feet, the toothpaste in our bathrooms — all things that people tend to take for granted.

Almost everyone has clothes or shoes they no longer wear but are still in good condition. These are precisely the items that organizations look for when asking for donations to support those experiencing homelessness, and all it takes is a little closet cleaning.

When I chose Project Humanities at Arizona State University as a summer internship site, I felt that I would assimilate easily into Project Humanities. However, despite having previous experience doing community service, I find that this organization goes beyond anything I had ever done before.

The mission of the award-winning Project Humanities is to bring people together to “talk, listen and connect” across disciplines, communities, generations and professions.

Outreach to diverse communities both inside and beyond ASU is central to the project's goals and accomplishments. I see many opportunities for service, but what makes Project Humanities different is the dedication of the people and the extent to which the organization goes to accomplish its mission.

I discovered the program when searching for summer internships toward the end of the school year.

Co-founded by Professor Neal A. Lester at ASU, Project Humanities has for the past couple of years spawned a social movement called Humanity 101 — intentional programming and activities at ASU and across the Valley that promote these seven values: kindness, empathy, compassion, respect, forgiveness, integrity and self-reflection.

This focus responds to the question many ask when reading the local, national and global headlines that make us wonder: “Are we losing our humanity?”

Through the project's bimonthly Service Saturdays, I have already seen these principles being enacted by anywhere from 20 to nearly 50 volunteers from ASU and across the Valley.

I realized that I had more freedom to make an impact than I originally had thought.

Volunteers of all ages come together from 6:30 to 8:15 a.m. in downtown Phoenix to distribute clothing, shoes, water and toiletries to 150 to 200 adults experiencing stages of homelessness.

Participating in this “Humanity 101 in Action” activity is quite moving, and I realized that I had more freedom to make an impact than I originally had thought.

As a high school intern, I am involved in tasks that support our homeless outreach project.

Among these tasks, I find ways to let others know that everyone has the ability to contribute, and those contributions can include donating and collecting items, sorting items and volunteering on Saturday mornings to distribute.

Project Humanities has given me the opportunity to make a true difference in my community, and I know that participating in this internship has already proven invaluable to me by widening my perspective on the world.

I realize that it is important to recognize the wide spectrum of circumstances any person can be facing at a given time and to be mindful of that fact. No one lives the same way, but we certainly all have the ability to support each other through mutual guidance and compassion.

This initiative matters to me, and it matters to the hundreds of people who benefit from our services.

ASU Project Humanities serves as a symbol for what people should strive for in life — understanding through connecting with one another.

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