

Please, tell something about yourself.

I am Nikiwe Ntabeni, I am 21 years old.

I was born in Cape Town, South Africa and I am staying with my Mom and my 5 older sisters. I grew up in a township called Khayelitsha and I studied my primary and secondary school in the same township. I grew up as a shy, friendly, active, confident, self motivated and independent girl, and I am still like that even now.

What about your experience at Volunteer Centre - Why did you decide to be a volunteer?

I decided to be a volunteer because, I was naturally born to be a helper, I enjoy giving and sharing and I have noticed that many people gain a lot from me. And that gives me an opportunity to learn more about people and it gives me a chance to have free new learning everyday.

“That gives me an Opportunity to Learn more about People and a Chance to have Free New Learning everyay.”

Which kind of volunteering work have you been involved in? For how long?

I was involved in Volunteer Center Intergeneration program for 2½ years, while I was at school. And we were working with disable and old people. We play, make their hair and nails, share stories, we interview and write some stories about their lives and go to camps with them. And I have also volunteered as an Administration worker for the Mitchells Plain office of Volunteer Centre for 6months.

Which kind of service does Volunteer Centre provide your community with?

Volunteer centre has a Satellite office in Khayelitsha, that means everyone knows about it, and they have youth programs, and they always have some youth awareness. Volunteer centre also has a good relationship with other organizations in order to transfer volunteers to their working field according to volunteers interest.

How do you think people see voluntary work?

Some people see volunteer work as for unemployed people, others think it's for people who have money, since you don't get paid. While others think that it's a waist of time.

What does volunteering mean for you? How has it affected your life, if it does?

Volunteering means to give free services, without any expectation of any payment. It's about sharing and learning new ideas and skills. And it gives you opportunity to network, attend meetings and free workshops. It affected my life in a way that it gives me a good image in my community, and I even forget that I am not going to get paid; I really enjoy it. And it keeps me busy and I've learnt a lot of stuff from being a volunteer especially about my self.

“Some People say volunteer work is for Unemployed people or for people who Have Money...”

Do you think young people should do this experience? Why?

It will be a very good thing to see young people doing volunteer work from primary school, and for me that will bring the spirit of (ubuntu) helping and sharing in early ages. And looking at most of the youth, they doing nothing, but if they can start volunteer work they can get more skills and make a change in their lives and in our communities. And if a young person doesn't have any kind of work experience, it

would be a little harder to get hired. Most places would prefer to hire someone with any kind of work experience or who has a record to show that the applicant has a good work ethic.

So how does one get any kind of work experience if they can't get hired for a paying job? There's always the opportunity to sign up for volunteer jobs to gain work experience; in the long run, having volunteer experience on their record can help snag a paying job in the future.

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Why did you decide to apply for an Exchange Programme?

I decided to apply for Exchange program, 1st because it was one of my dreams while I was growing-up to go overseas. 2nd I am always curious to know, learn and experience more about other people's life style and culture.

What have you learnt from the experience abroad?

From my experience abroad, in my foreign community Sunshine coast in Canada, everyone was so involved in volunteer work in an amazing way. Recycling is one of the things that I really like about Canada compared to my township. Their parenting skills, the way they raise their children, talk, play with them just that good relationship they have with their kids I really like it. And I've experience that not everything is smooth as I used to think about Canada and other overseas countries; they have also unemployed people. I've also learnt more about myself and to be proud and love my country and my culture.

“ I have also learnt more
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What are the biggest challenges and benefits you got from this experience?

I never had much challenges from my trip, since I am always willing to try new things and I adapt easy. But Speaking English every day was the biggest challenge, and missing my family and food was a challenge from the first week and some days.

Did the experience abroad affect somehow your engagement in volunteering in your community? If yes, Why and How?

My experience did affect me a lot. When I came back I was so into recycling and so concerned about parenting skills. And also the healthy life style, training and doing yoga. I came back so confident and even more proud of myself.

Nikiwe is currentlty in Iceland, participating in an EVS (European Voluntary Service) programme for six months and is providing support to the Icelandic ICYE organization A.U.S. In their IYV + 10 campaign: "Volunteering Matters"
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