

For my volunteer project I chose to go with a big group from class to the South Plains Food Bank. This organization has been in the community for 41 years and serves a total of 19 counties. The website says 20 but the volunteer manager is working on getting the information corrected. They used to setup food drives to get donations but had to spend a lot of time salvaging through lots of canned good and other items. A lot of the donations would be damaged or expired so they had to throw these donations away. They decided to switch to a funding program instead so they could use the donation money on buying what the community was in more need of. They get a large amount of donations from a lot of the local stores such as HEB, Walmart and Market Street.

They receive such a large amount of food to distribute that they really depend on volunteers to come in and help them sort and prepare food for families to be able to come and pick up at scheduled times. They offer a senior and a regular option depending on age and family size. They go to events and set up booths to promote and help those in need sign up for the food box and other services such as food stamps if assistance is needed.

I was very nervous driving to the food bank because I am not familiar with that part of town but once I got there it was okay. Everyone at the food bank was so nice and helpful and they could not say thank you enough. We were such a big group that we were divided into two. My group went into the refrigerator section to help. We got into 3 smaller groups and together we were able to separate 480 bags of mandarin oranges. Our team leader was so impressed with our hard work and the speed we were able to move at as a team. We were able to complete our

task and she had to find more for us to work on. We were able to accomplish a lot in the time that we were there and get things ready to be moved to hand off to families. Being able to complete this assignment with my classmates really made it a better experience for me. We don't spend much time together other than our time in class, so it was nice to laugh and have fun together while doing something that was good for our community.

As we were getting ready to finish for the day, we had several employees ask if we would come back tomorrow. I have never completed a large volunteer project but after the experience I had I plan to visit and do it again. I left feeling very accomplished and proud of myself and our group. While working on bagging food, I realized once I was finished that I really did use my nursing knowledge on nutrition. We had bags that had lots of random items such as bread, lunch meat, pizza, sweets and other items. I chose the items for my bags based off nutrition. I made sure each bag had bread, a meat and some type of desert or a snack such as a pretzel. I learned that I can get out of my comfort zone and help make a difference for someone in need.