

Crisis Nursery of Effingham County: A Student Nurse's Experience and Reflection

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When my group decided where we wanted to go for our legacy project, it did not take long for us to select the Crisis Nursery of Effingham County. In large part, I believe this is because promoting the well-being of children is a cause to which everyone felt connected. The research I did on crisis nursery organizations for our literature review reinforced our decision and helped inspire passion for the project. I write today to reflect on our work, impact, and how the experience affected me. Although I cannot speak for my colleagues, I imagine they found their time at the Crisis Nursery as enriching as I did.

Going into the project, we knew that we would not provide direct care to children at the nursery. While I found this disappointing, we were able to help with several projects. In the morning, we prepared mailers for distribution throughout the Crisis Nursery's service area. While the nursery receives support from St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital, it is a small non-profit organization. Sending mailers in the community is crucial for building the organization's profile and increasing its resources. After finishing mailers, we helped change over the children's wardrobes from summer to fall and winter. As a part of this process, we set aside clothes suitable for donation to other organizations. Several group members, including myself, also helped to unload and put away diapers and formula. For the presentation portion of our project, while I am not skilled in producing visually pleasing presentations, I contributed to the group's effort in other ways. Specifically, during our day at the Crisis Nursery, I took photographs and made it a point to ask Meghan questions about the organization's work and needs. Furthermore, I was responsible for writing the media release for the project.

As previously mentioned, I think most of us hoped to work with the children during our experience. I feel most fulfilled when I can observe the fruit of my efforts, and the prospect of volunteering at the Crisis Nursery evoked an image of seeing a child smile after receiving care. While our

experience was different than I had initially envisioned, it was still meaningful. The organization's director, Meghan Rewers, explained that because the primary duty of staff is childcare, they often have little time to work on operationally crucial projects like the ones we did. As a result, we accomplished in a day what might have taken the staff over a month. Receiving this feedback brought me great satisfaction and broadened my perspective of what it takes to operate non-profit organizations; taking care of kids is the glamorous part, but it wouldn't be possible without people unloading supplies or sending out mailers.

I felt honored to participate in this project and developed an incredible respect for the hard work the staff and volunteers at the Crisis Nursery do. From experience, I know that caring for children well requires compassion, patience, attentiveness, and creativity. However, it is not just childcare that the Crisis Nursery's staff and volunteers must do. Growing and operating a small non-profit organization is an endeavor that takes planning, dedication, and, sometimes, luck. Meghan faced many non-trivial hurdles to get the organization running; finding a location, securing funding, attracting volunteers, state compliance, and expanding services. The Crisis Nursery was no small undertaking, and it would not have been possible without Meghan's passion for her cause. Participating in the legacy project also helped strengthen my collaborative skills. I have previously struggled with giving up control and trusting others with tasks. I found that clear communication about expectations and timeframes between group members helped make the project less stressful. Moreover, I learned that, when done well, group work is liberating rather than burdensome.

