

# ***Literacy Volunteers of Chippewa Valley***

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*“Forget graduation requirement; service-learning is a graduation privilege!”* These are the compelling words of Briana Bryant, a UWEC student who fulfilled her service-learning hours through the Literacy Volunteers of Chippewa Valley (LVCV). Briana learned of this opportunity last year while attending the Service-Learning Community Action Fair, which takes place in both the fall and spring. “I was looking for something that I could be good at and something for someone who likes English type things.” And when she came across the literacy booth, she knew it was the perfect place for her!

While at LVCV, Briana mostly worked one-on-one with adults—sometimes their families also—helping them with their reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills. Basically all the skills they need to learn a language. And it definitely turned into more than she expected. “I started volunteering there in September of last year. And it’s only 30 hours that you need to do, so I could have been done in December, but I liked it so much that I just kept going for the rest of the school year. It ended up being the best part of my day; I always looked forward to it.”

As the interview went on, Briana shared more about her experience, “I went into it not really knowing how much I would get out of it. But I loved getting to know the people there. I wasn’t just teaching them how to read and write, I was getting to know them on a personal basis. Because of the experience, I was able to form great relationships.”

As we chatted more she shared what personal characteristics were strengthened through her experience. “My own English skills were strengthened which sounds weird! But as I worked with them, I was learning better ways to use my English skills in explaining things, which also strengthened my teaching skills. I just got better at talking with people that come from different backgrounds and learned how to communicate with people and describe things in different ways. I also learned how to communicate with people in other ways besides just talking, like using body language.”

Briana said, “I learned that there is a way for everyone to help other people, even if you think you don’t have time or a lot of money or special skill; there’s always a way you can help. The experience has made me realize that I would like to keep volunteering as a part of my life. Even when I have a career I’d still like to give back in some way, because I think it’s a very valuable thing, not only for the people you are helping but also for yourself. It definitely goes both ways.”

She also shared how it’s impacted her life. “It helped me to have a lot of compassion for people in the community. I can just see a need there; and for me, it was that they needed help learning English. And being able to help them with something that is so important to them was very powerful.”

Briana’s final message to students is, “Technically, service-learning is a requirement to graduate, but I think we are so lucky to have this opportunity. This is the time in our lives to volunteer and we should really be taking advantage of it. It not only helps other people, but it helps us grow as well. Some students see it as just service-learning, but it can be so much more than that.”

\*If this sounds like something you’d like to be involved with be sure to check out the Literacy Volunteers of Chippewa Valley’s website! <http://www.lvcv.org/>

\*And also don’t forget to check out the Center for Service-Learning webpage to start your project today!

<http://www.uwec.edu/SL/>