GlamourGals: Bringing Beauty Into The Lives Of Seniors

January 29, 2019 by Diane — Leave a Comment
Today I’m introducing you to **GlamourGals**, an organization that creates connections between students and nursing home residents. By providing complimentary manicures and makeovers in senior centers, these volunteers brighten the days of the residents and help alleviate loneliness.

Beginning in 2000, GlamourGals has expanded to more than 100 chapters across the United States and in Canada. These student-led organizations also provide valuable leadership opportunities and training for high school and college students.

I’m thrilled that two GlamourGals volunteers, Stephanie Azzopardi and Prianka Devi Koya, graciously offered to share their experiences with my readers. I hope their stories will inspire you to start a GlamourGals chapter in your community!

- **How did you become involved in GlamourGals?**

**Stephanie**

I started volunteering with GlamourGals in high school and enjoyed the experience so much that I continued volunteering at Hunter College and became the president of the Hunter College chapter.

When I first started volunteering with GlamourGals as a teenager, I was mainly drawn in by the fun of the makeovers and manicures. I quickly realized that the work I performed as a GlamourGals volunteer brought smiles to many faces and made a huge impact in my community.

Since graduating college, I have been a member of the Advisory Council to help promote the continued success and growth of the organization.

**Prianka**

I attend New York University, and every semester there is a club fair where students can learn about the different clubs. I attended my freshman year, knew I wanted to join a service club, and saw that GlamourGals needed a treasurer, so I volunteered. Then, before I knew it I became president of our chapter this year.

- **How do you see GlamourGals benefiting nursing home residents?**
**Stephanie**

A GlamourGals visit is a very special occasion for nursing home residents. This is a day when they feel especially cared for and listened to. The happy faces of our volunteers bring energy and liveliness to their community.

**Prianka**

We visit two different senior centers. One is smaller and our chapter has been visiting the center for over 3 years. I have heard seniors say things like, “This really made my day” or “I can't wait to show off these nails!” Every time we visit a center we are adding light to the seniors’ day.

The second center we visit also assists homeless seniors. When we go there, we are not only addressing senior isolation but also providing basic nail care for many of the seniors who may not have access to it.

- **How does volunteering with GlamourGals benefit students?**

**Stephanie**

The volunteers in high school and college chapters have the opportunity to build a team and give back to their communities in meaningful ways. There are many opportunities for leadership in each GlamourGals chapter.

**Prianka**

I think volunteering and giving back to the community is a benefit in itself. It is humbling and improves one's community.

GlamourGals is unique in that it has students interact with senior citizens. During my manicures, I have heard stories about marriage, divorce, death, the Great Depression, past presidents, and countless others. Every time I leave the senior centers, I come back with something new to think about and reflect on.

- **What's your favorite part of volunteering?**
Stephanie

I love to hear the stories of others who carry different perspectives because of their age, occupation, and life experiences. It is easy to become consumed in interaction with only people of my own generation. GlamourGals provides the opportunity to break down the generational barriers and create a greater sense of connectedness between all individuals of the community.

Prianka

My favorite part about volunteering is organizing it all. As president, there are a lot of things to do. I have to manage our officers, reserve rooms for our meeting, post about our visits and recruit volunteers.

Now, instead of procrastination on Facebook, I procrastinate by answering emails, advertising our chapter, or by coordinating with the senior centers. It’s great being able to have so much influence over our chapter because I know that the more work I put into it, the more positivity it will add to our community.

- Is there a special story you wish to share with our readers?

Stephanie

As a high school volunteer, my chapter made monthly visits to a local nursing home. I noticed there was one female resident who would always stay in the common area but never wished to have a makeover or manicure done.

In fact, she never engaged in conversations during our visits, and I was very eager to invite her to engage and feel more comfortable. During one makeover, the nursing home attendant told me that the woman’s name was Mary, and she almost never talks or smiles.

At the next makeover, I decided to go over to Mary and start talking to her about the weekend, the vacation that I was planning, and the subjects I studied in school. She glanced my way a few times during the one-sided conversation, but I thought that my attempts to engage her were unsuccessful.
To my surprise, as the volunteers were leaving and saying our goodbyes, Mary's face lit up and she waved back and smiled. Since that day, Mary started to engage more in our visits and her mood has been very light around us. I learned that connecting with people can sometimes be challenging, but it is a worthwhile effort.

**Prianka**

This year, I became the president of our chapter at NYU. After advertising our club at our university’s club fair, we had about 20-25 people interested in volunteering with us. However, the center we visit can only handle about 5-10 volunteers. That gave me the idea to add a second senior center to our regular monthly visits.

The second center is much larger and also assists homeless seniors. On our first visit, we had many male seniors join us to have their nails filed and cleaned. We had about 10 volunteers, and by the end, we provided 30 manicures.

Seeing the growth of our club has been an incredible experience. When I joined our chapter during my freshman year of college, there were about 2 or 3 volunteers on each visit. Four years later, there are about 15-20 volunteers a month, and we visit two different senior centers.

**How will your experience with GlamourGals influence your future career?**

**Stephanie**

I am pursuing my medical education and will one day practice medicine. As a GlamourGals volunteer, I discovered that I enjoy connecting with and caring for others.

I built many relationships with many residents suffering from dementia and learned strategies to enable good communication, which I can take to my future practice.

**Prianka**

Being president of our chapter has made me a better planner, more conscientiousness, and organized. These are all skills that will undoubtedly help me in any future career.
Are you ready to start a GlamourGals chapter in your community? You’ll find all the resources you need on the GlamourGals website.

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