USC Chapter of GlamourGals Shows the Beauty of Intergenerational Friendship

Volunteer opportunity provides senior living residents with manicures, makeovers, and companionship and inspires a gerontology student to do more.

BY LOIS ALBERT ANGELO | February 19, 2020

At Belmont Senior Village in the Hollywood Hills, volunteers from the USC GlamourGals chapter are greeted by a group of older adults excited to connect and chat. The residents cheerfully tell stories and share laughs with the volunteers – and many also get a fun new nail color.

With over 100 high school and college chapters across the United States, GlamourGals has empowered young people to connect with older adults while providing manicures and makeovers. The USC chapter, headed by President Anjali Devgan, continues to serve the nearby older adult population and hopes to expand outward to new areas.

Devgan, a junior majoring in health and human sciences with an emphasis in gerontology, says the USC chapter has grown since her freshman year, when it was
comprised of about five students. Today, the group’s recruitment efforts have increased the pool of volunteers to more than 300. Their activities help put a human face on the study of aging.

"You really notice how precious life is and what the importance of gerontology is," Devgan said. "You realize why we study longevity so much, and why it’s important to see how aging affects everyone differently."

McCrae Mower, junior in lifespan health and USC GlamourGals vice president, said GlamourGals gives volunteers a terrific way to help older adults and spread joy. In addition to providing manicures, the group delivers student-made greeting cards to residents.

"Just being able to bring a smile to someone else’s face really makes my day. … It’s just so fun to just make the cards and share our goals and mission with other students at USC. Then, to be able to bring them to different residents at the nursing home and be able to see their smile when they see that we’ve made something personal for them always really makes me happy," Mower said.

The student volunteers learn more about the daily lives of older adults living in these care facilities, where issues relating to social isolation in older adults are often prevalent. Many volunteers realize this ever-growing issue and gain a deeper appreciation not only for older adults in their own lives, but also for the opportunity to provide service.

**Developing new gerontology curriculum for volunteers**

Devgan has many plans for the chapter in the near future, and she hopes to expand to new care facilities as a means of addressing the health and isolation of older adult populations in minority groups. On a national level, Devgan has begun work on a Gerontology Volunteer Education Plan with the assistance of USC Instructional Associate Professor of Gerontology **Paul Nash** and Rachel Doyle, the CEO and founder of GlamourGals.

Learning about the detrimental impact of social isolation and ageism, Devgan hopes to share succinct and persuasive information about population aging and diversification for an audience of volunteers who want to help older adults but may not know about gerontology.

"I actually was in a writing class at USC where we had to write a project proposal, and I wrote mine about GlamourGals because it’s something I’m so passionate about," Devgan said
Devgan’s proposal has three parts to it, with the first component focusing on the need to diversify the older adult population with whom the organization works. Devgan emphasized the importance of finding lower-income and more racially diverse homes and efficiently pitching the project to senior home directors and staff. The second part of the proposal entailed educating volunteers about issues relevant to gerontology, such as isolation among older adults and the ramifications of implicit ageism. The third component — something Devgan hopes to implement in the future — involves a feedback mechanism allowing for staff and residents of these senior homes to comment on their experiences with GlamourGals.

As the 20th anniversary of GlamourGals approaches, Devgan hopes to expand to new care facilities as a means of addressing the health and isolation of older adult populations in minority groups. She will be sharing her progress with GlamourGals with the rest of the organization later this year.

*Photos by Lois Albert Angelo*