

## **Volunteer Hours Log: Reflection and Observation**

I have been working as a volunteer at the Olympia Food Coop at 921 North Rogers Street in Olympia for nine weeks. I also worked there as a volunteer a few years ago, from 2007 until 2012.

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Just as I was working at the Free Store before, so I am working there again. The Free Store is located in front of the West Olympia Coop in an attached area the size of a large shed. Many things have changed, for example there are different volunteers working one day 52 a week. There is a schedule so people can see when it is open. It is a part of the coop, and a part of the business enterprise that operates on a schedule. We interact with the customers, and although it isn't a school setting, it definitely is a family kind of place. 53

The last time I worked at the Coop I wrote a mission statement for the Free Store. We had a meeting and I wrote down some of the suggested reasons to have it. We believe that by reducing and re-using we are helping the environment. While keeping things out of the landfill we also benefit by re-cycling personal items and clothing. We are serving the homeless and low income communities, and we support an alternative economic model. 77

Nyna Matysiak is the Volunteer Coordinator. Kathy Noble, who works in the Free Store, trained me the first day. The Free Store is definitely "kids friendly". Everything is free. Kids come there with their families, and some times teen-agers come there in groups to look through "the free stuff". These kids are of all ages. I call them "kids" because that's what they used to say when I worked as an Educational Assistant for the Public Schools here in Thurston



County from 2003 to 2009. Some of the items are kids clothing and toys. Women shoppers with young children stop in on their way in or out of the Coop.<sup>100</sup>

I often talk with the mothers, and I can observe their interactions with their children. I can relate this to child psychology with amazing frequency. I used to read about developmental psychology. the Coop is a community-based grocery with two stores here in the Olympia area. They are member in a larger organization consisting of many cooperatives located throughout the Pacific Northwest Region. With organic produce, and other 'natural foods', this is a healthy environment for kids, and valued by the patrons and volunteers. The coop feels much like a community first ethic that includes working class and career oriented folks alike.

This environment has inspired my ambition to become a teacher. i am interested in teaching elementary school in the public school setting. I see the caring parents, that are not all wealthy, and that they are helping to create a better world. I believe that children need to learn in school about modern living in juxtaposition to the older generation realities. Most important in the sciences is that chemical processes are used in manufacturing and technologies, but little consideration is given to poisonous waste products, endless stock piles of broken machinery, and the destruction of farmland and natural habitat.

These communities such as the Olympia Food Coop are fighting for a sustainable future. they are in part the inspiration that maintains my interest in teaching. I include the need to teach subjects such as basic English, languages, Reading, Writing, mathematics, and natural science so they grow to appreciate the natural world.

Native Americans inspired the writing of the Bill of Rights and their culture is alive and should continue to guide our path toward appreciation of and love for a healthy planet. It is necessary for our survival that we learn to respect and nurture this planet Earth. It was not so



messed up when we inherited it, and we should strive to pass a clean and beautiful world on to our descendents.