



Living Service

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There are as many reasons for coming to Amate as there are volunteers, but the one thing we all have in common is our desire to do service. The question is... what does service actually mean? It seems like a pretty simple question, but in fact, it's quite difficult to answer.

For some, service just means volunteering your time to do something for someone else. It's an extra... a way of doing something good or helpful. For others, service is a way of earning kudos or atoning for one's wrongs. There's nothing wrong with either of these ideas, but at Amate House, service isn't either of these things. It is a way of life.

When we come to Amate House, it isn't for accolades or atonement. It's isn't just "something extra". We come because we want to live the tenets, and most outwardly, we want to live service. Let's be honest... it's not exactly the norm to "give up" a year of your life to work with the poor, the hungry, and the underserved. Just because it's not the norm, doesn't mean it's not normal... and it also doesn't mean it's "giving up" a year... it's being given a wonderful opportunity.

As with your friends who are likely earning an income for the first time, there will be successes and disappointments throughout your service year. There will be plenty of times when you'll wonder what you've gotten yourself into. I can't even count how many times I thought I'd made a huge mistake choosing the worksite I did. Luckily for me (and for you, too), in Amate House, we have the support of the wonderful staff for those times when we're not sure we made the right decision. Your friends outside of Amate House likely won't have that. You'll also have the support of your community. How many of your friends will get to come home to celebrate or commiserate about their jobs with 7-12 people? All of these things are great... but they aren't the best part of our service.

The best part of our service is the ways in which ***we are served*** by those with whom we work. My clients have brought so many wonderful things to my life. They have shown me the value of patience, trust, compassion, and unwavering determination. They have taught me more than I could ever possibly hope to communicate.

Another way service enters into our lives at Amate House is through our roommates. When else will you be able to learn about so many issues while sitting in your own home? I have been blessed to hear the stories of my roommates' clients and students, as each of you will be. This is service, too. Many times, the people we serve have little or no voice in our society. Sharing our clients' and students' stories with each another is a service to them and a gift to ourselves.

There are also ways to serve your community. Sometimes, it's being there to listen to someone who had a bad day. Other times, it's doing a dish someone forgot. Often, it's making the choice not to be irritated that someone didn't do their dish or chore. If you make the daily choice to serve long enough, it stops being a choice and becomes a way of living... and that's what Amate House is all about.