

## Kew Gardens Student Volunteer Interview

**Eric Nguyen**

**Melbourne High School — Class of 2015 (Year 12)**

### What has been the most enjoyable part of volunteering?

The most enjoyable part of volunteering, for me, was interacting with the residents. From my experience volunteering at Kew Gardens Aged Care, I was profoundly privileged to hear the stories that the residents shared about the extraordinary lives that they lived. Every resident was unique, each had a different story to tell, and I suppose the most enjoyable part of my volunteering experience was seeing the plethora of different personalities the residents exhibited and embracing the sage advice and words of wisdom given to me by the residents.



*Eric exchanges stories with Barry Beach.*

### Did you develop any special friendships whilst visiting the residents?

Yes, I formed many special friendships while visiting the residents, and I believe that these friendships were definitely the highlight of my volunteering experience. Firstly, the friendships that I had formed with the residents are the ones that I will certainly remember for a very, very long time. I got to know a lot of the residents, and for some we had established a very strong connection from the get-go. One resident even insisted to get down my address and telephone number before I left! I was also absolutely honoured to be able to work with the wonderful Lifestyle Team, who were not only very supportive and caring towards me and the residents but who were also very humorous and down-to-earth individuals. The staff members, no doubt, put 100% effort in providing the best possible care & lifestyle opportunities for the residents, and in establishing a very positive and supportive atmosphere for the staff and volunteers.

### What have you learnt about looking after the elderly?

I believe that the biggest thing I have learnt about looking after the elderly is the importance of listening. From this skill, I have learnt to be more understanding of the residents' needs, their circumstances, their limitations and their feelings and emotions. I have learnt that empathy is very important skill in facilitating communication and in developing a strong, honest and trustful relationship with the residents.

### What activities did you enjoy the most?

I thoroughly enjoyed the morning walks in the Alexandra Gardens directly next door to the facility. The talks with residents were always insightful and at times entertaining, and it was hard to be disappointed by the magnificent view that Kew Gardens had to offer us. Other activities I enjoyed were the German dancing concert and the Zumba dance exercises!

### Would you consider a career in aged care?

Personally, my career goal is to study medicine and become a medical doctor. I believe that my volunteering experience here at Kew Gardens Aged Care, and the skills in communicating, understanding and dealing with people that I have developed from this experience, will definitely help me in achieving my future career goal. However, after my volunteering experience, aged care is certainly a field that I am a lot more interested in than I was before volunteering and I would certainly consider aged care as a possible career pathway more so than before.

### Do you think all students should do volunteering?

Yes! Volunteering is something that all students should consider doing at least once in their lifetime. Although caring for people can be both physically and emotionally challenging, from experience, it is definitely one of the most rewarding experiences that anyone could have & the lifestyle staff were so supportive & encouraging.



*Participating in a Zumba class!*