

Lifestyles

Students find retirement center work more enjoyable than other jobs

By Terri Welch
The Battalion

Students from Texas A&M have found away to bridge the generation gap at Walden Retirement Community in Bryan.

Waiting tables at Walden, Perry Liston, a senior speech communication major from Conroe, said it is both a unique and rewarding experience.

"We get to see the same residents everyday," he said, "And this allows us to get to know them real well."

Another member of the wait staff, Amy Courville, a senior marketing major from Houston agrees that it is more than just a job.

"You are the only people they see day in and day out," she said. "I think it is a mutual enjoyment, they enjoy us as much as we enjoy them."

A lot of the people are former students that tell stories about their college days, they said. Others are here because their

sons or daughters teach at A&M or their families live in the area.

"The location of the community in Bryan is a great advantage," Liston said. "There is something for everyone no matter why they are here."

In order to live at Walden, the residents must be ambulatory, he said. They must be able to move around and are not bedridden.

"There are some residents who are great, very bubbly," Liston said, "And there are some who are very quiet and keep to themselves. There is a wide variety of people."

The community provides residents with 24 hour security, condominiums that include pull cords in case of an emergency, a pool and continuous programmed activities. There is a shuttle for the residents who do not drive that takes them to the bank, church, the grocery store or appointments.

Bridging the Gap

A breakfast and/or lunch plan is available and this is where Courville and Liston work as waiters. The residents are able to make their own dinner in their kitchen areas at home.

"A great thing about working at the community is that we work for wages, not

tips," he said. "I am friends with the people I work with; there is no competition for tips."

Liston said that when a resident is talking with him, there is no pressure to rush back to work. "You give them an ear," he said, "You don't disregard them and the stories they tell are so funny and interesting."

One resident attended The University of Texas and Liston said she tells the student workers that they should be at school there. Two residents who were once single, met at Walden, fell in love, married and still live at the community.

Both students said their previous experience with the organization Aggiehostel, where students work with senior citizens, gave them an edge on the job at Walden.

The valuable experiences that

Courville and Liston are gaining at the community definitely contribute to the decisions they will make about their future, they said.

"At this point in my life, so many doors can be opened with my degree," said, "And my job at Walden has shown me that working with the residents here something I could do in the future."

"I don't know what the future holds for me," Courville said, "But I will likely be dealing with all types of people and this job will help."

The everyday contact at the community has also given Liston a new perspective on the well-being of his own grandparents.

"It makes me worried," he said, "to see where Walden would be a secure safe place for them."

It is not only his grandparents that come to mind, Liston said.

"Someday, I hope people care the same for me like the employees care for Walden."



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