

Andrew Aviles
SOCL 258
Dr. Maas Weigert
Spring 2020

My Experience at Care For Real

Upon arriving at the establishment Care For Real I encountered many people of all races and ages all seeking one thing, aid. I became acquainted with Karen the supervisor overseeing the operations of the Care For Real aid center after having been interviewed before beginning my volunteering experience. Now the interview was less of a personal review as to whether or not myself and those with me were capable of accomplishing our roles, however, to predominantly provide a lecture to us on the history of the establishment and the crisis they are facing regularly. These citizens would sit or even line up with numbers given to them to be called upon akin to a DMV number calling waiting system. Throughout the speech I received during my first visit, it was heavily explained the severity of those in need, as the citizens arriving at Care For Real were not only susceptible to homelessness, but were susceptible to hunger and a lack of clothing.

I was then given a walkthrough to explain to me where items such as clothing, foods, or objects are placed. Karen would then explain to me that there are staff workers that go through each item to decide whether or not someone would want to receive it. This became a theme at Care For Real to raise the bar as to what those in need should be provided. Karen emphasized that although they are desperate and in need, they are still human and deserve quality food and clothes, dispelling the notion that beggars cannot be choosers.

Among the distributions offered to citizens asking for help were food and other essentials in the pet pantry section further suggesting that Care For Real actually takes into

account that a person in need can still be an animal lover and should never be forced to decide between feeding themselves or their beloved pet.

Karen explained in a thoughtful manner, and if more citizens of Earth had heard may change minds that despite citizens in need being in a position to not demand, they absolutely deserve the opportunity to receive items they like, instead of food or clothes that they do not even enjoy. Karen even explained the specificities of food distribution as some of the citizens requesting food were religious and therefore could not eat pork, which Karen explained they had a surplus of due to pork being refused by religious citizens unable to consume the food for their religion as well as stating that we have a surplus due to the current administration's role in trade and farming.

I was told by the supervisor overseeing Care For Real that many of the staff there were volunteers and not paid except for herself along with two others. I was told that I should fill out a survey of what I would like to volunteer as at the Care For Real center and was placed in the manual labor part of the options. The manual labor aspect of the operations occurring at Care For Real included receiving shipments in the form of truckloads, unpacking and constantly moving around to get the crates and boxes organized to immediately be ready to distribute to those in line waiting to be fed or clothed.

All the staff were working at a rapid pace due to the reality that as humans we understood the severity and crisis at hand. The manual labor workers including myself all tirelessly worked to unpack and move heavy crates that we were graciously given by whomever was able to donate. Among the manual labor workers, we would rush to give any clothing received to the two women in the clothing section working At Care For Real. These two women

went through clothing received and would decide whether they themselves would wear it or rather if someone would feel human wearing them, discarding ripped or damaged clothing donated. This important theme would reoccur that although citizens are desperate, we should come together as a society to raise the bar as to what quality of life people should receive when distributing food and clothing.

After speaking with some of the other tired and hard worked manual labor workers moving the heavy crates and rearranging them to satisfy storage space, including climbing to stack these crates to the ceiling, they told me they were in fact not volunteers. The manual labor workers I had been carrying and unloading crates with were there operating by court order. They explained to me that the state has ordered them to work under Karen at Care For Real until the end of their punishment many months later and told me they had already been there for many months. These court ordered workers explained to me what they had done to receive their court ordered mandate to volunteer and explained who was volunteering to help, who was there by court order, and who was paid staff at Care For Real.

I understood that the state had made an interesting decision to place citizens who have committed crimes to instead of facing imprisonment and face recidivism along with long term complications to reenter society, they instead be ordered to help those in need. Each day we all came together and focused on helping those in need and placed the emphasis on distributing help to those desperately in need of aid rather than by what means we all got to Care For Real.

I found my experience at Care For Real to be enlightening and something more students and citizens should experience. Whether it be the food distribution aspect my peers engaged in, looking into the eyes of those hungry for help and even placing a name behind the faces

distributing to as these citizens were regular to the center, or my role in unloading crates in the production line. Karen upon introducing me to the Care For Real center she oversees explained that she knew many of the citizens there and had even developed relationships with them, making jokes with them as she knew these citizens were likely to come back for further aid distribution from the Care for Real center. Unfortunately my time at Care For Real along with the other volunteers and staff were abruptly ended due to the Covid-19 outbreak and raises concern as to how distribution centers will be able to fulfill their goals as human interaction will forever be altered.