

SAMPLE A

1. What did you learn about yourself?

Volunteering at the Computer Science for the Visually Impaired Conference allowed me to witness first-hand the hurdles that challenge the visually impaired. Never had I communicated with a disabled person, except for the occasional greetings, nor truly understood their life's struggle. Having served as both Mrs.Saunders' (the supervisor for the volunteering program) assistant prior to the event and as a volunteer for the conference has given me exposure to the other side of America that I had never encountered. Prior to this engagement, I had always believed that America's disabled were well protected under the American With Disabilities Act. However, while many do receive assistance from the government in the form of services such as transportation, they are stuck with the societal stigma that people with disabilities cannot perform as well as regular employees in the workforce. This impedes their career and hopes for success as they are often discriminated against by employers who doubt their potential. While the federal government does mandate that large companies hire a certain percentage of their workforce with people with disabilities, many are given menial tasks that can easily completed by anyone with no experience. This causes many to live to unfulfilling lives since they have spent their entire life striving to become a professional in a career path, only to be given a task that could completed by anyone who did not put in any effort. The unfairness this situation presents hinders the job prospects of people who are visually impaired, and many, due to bleakness and apparent near impossibility of obtaining a fulfilling career, have given up trying.

2. What is the mission of the organization and how does it connect to the larger political, economic, social, and cultural forces that share American Society? Can you think of any alternative solutions for addressing the needs this organization serves?

The Center for the Visually Impaired People strives to correct our current system of discrimination by creating more exposure to bigger companies and small businesses alike. A guest note speaker from IBM urged company representatives to invest in the disabilities workforce and technological assistance to the visually impaired due to the potential gains from venturing into this business. As more and more companies begin to hire people with disabilities, tapping into this market can yield significant profits as well as improving the lives of many. Two representatives from Ernst and Young praised their employees

with disabilities and extolled their dedication and are currently hoping to hire more in the future. A small firm even hired 70% of its workforce with employees with disabilities, and has not encountered a hitch in their business. Furthermore, the CCVIP attracts vendors from across the country to showcase future technological devices that can improve workforce efficiency and dependability. What the conference contributes above all else, however, is hope to the many that are close to giving up. The conference allows people to speak face-to-face with employers to know their requirements, as well as allowing the employers to understand the visually impaired people's needs and accommodation. I believe more exposure is needed to this deserving and eager workforce. More technology should be made available to allow them to perform as well as or better than regular employees in order for them to be taken seriously in the workforce. As seen in the examples of Ernst and Young and the small law firm, hiring people with disabilities is not a burden, but a blessing as others will respect a company that cares for people with disabilities and takes them seriously.

3. Explain whether you would engage in this community service again. How has this experience influenced how you will engage in your next service project?

I would like to participate in this event in the future since I enjoyed helping contribute to this event. From helping Ms.Saunders prepare for the event to assisting and guiding people throughout the conference, the CCVIP has been a very rewarding experience. Since I enjoyed assisting people, I would like to engage in another service project that demands similar tasks.