



Solidarity

I recently spent some vacation time in Colorado, hiking amongst the Rocky Mountains. During my time there, I was moved by the aspen trees—their unique white and lime green coloring, their scars from animals that covered the lower trunks, their branches at the top that reached for the heavens in such a stunning way. But I was also fascinated by the fact that they always came together—in groves scattered over the hillside—never alone, never too beautiful to be seen with others. And indeed, in my research, I found that those groves are really one organism underground. We look at aspens and see individual trees, when really they are all connected in a web of solidarity with one another.

This is how I came to recognize solidarity through my Xavier Summer Service Internship at United Cerebral Palsy. There is a sense of oneness that I now feel with all the participants there—a sense that our lives are bound up together whether we realize it or not. Their suffering is my suffering just as my suffering is their suffering. One participant put it beautifully when I told him that I was happy that particular day. He said, “it makes me happy that you are happy.”

This summer I have been blessed to learn from both nature and my internship... I have learned to see the full humanity in every person and their capacity to offer me humanity. The idea of solidarity is no longer some foreign concept to me, because I now see how I am immersed in this web of humanity deep down just as the aspen trees are really aspen groves underneath it all.

- Ellen Schroeder, Class of 2010 (Summer Service Intern, 2009)