

Essay by Daniel Martinez

Hello, I am Daniel Martinez and I would like to share my experience about the FAWCO Youth Program in Berlin. This was my first time in Berlin. For me, Berlin is a very cultural city with an interesting history.

In my opinion, you can learn a great amount of World War II. However, there is much more to this city. Berlin is filled with so many charitable organizations trying to make the lives of its own people better. I was lucky enough to be able to experience the work that these organizations do. The first organization that we visited was Serve the City. There we met Christine, the director, who introduced us to their programs. We worked in the garden pulling weeds and raking leaves. Later on, we played with the disabled children and abandoned children at the Evangelische Wohnstätten Siloah. It felt good to put a smile on their faces. Another project that Serve the City supports is the sorting of clothes for the homeless and refugees at the Berliner Stadtmission. The sad thing here is that 70% of the clothes that are donated are unusable. We also visited an elderly home. I helped pick up trash and played games with elderly people.

One day we visited the Ronald McDonald House. Here we painted walls, which was a lot of fun. What I was really looking forward to was serving food to homeless people. It was a nice feeling to see the smiles on the people's faces after they received their food. They seemed very grateful.

My highlight of the week though was meeting Margot Friedlander, the Holocaust survivor. Her story was so interesting, that I bought a book from her. I think she is a very strong lady and she made a lasting impression on me. It was tough for me to process the horror experience she went through. I was learning about World War II in school before I came to Berlin. Her stories made history come alive.

All these experiences taught me to respect other human beings and to try to do good things on this earth.

I would like to thank the American Women's Club of Berlin for this opportunity to help others less fortunate than I am. A big thank you goes to Jacqueline Routier, my host mother, for making me feel comfortable during the entire week.