

When I first started working at the mission Stuart had asked me to write a summary of my experience once my summer position was over. Keeping in mind that I would have to present my experience, I decided to write down what thoughts I had about the mission and the area in which it was located before I started working here.

Before working at the mission I had never heard of the SNCM or been to the 20<sup>th</sup> street area. In fact, I tried to avoid 20<sup>th</sup> street based on what I had heard from friends and acquaintances. I was told not to go to 20<sup>th</sup> street, especially not at night, because it was a dangerous area consisting of drug dealers, street workers, and other people I did not want to run into. The image that had been painted in my mind led me to believe that if I were to be in this area that I was asking for trouble. This idea seemed to be confirmed when I showed up for my first day at the mission only to be greeted by a gated parking lot, people fighting in the street, and a job description which included the possibility of dealing with convulsing patrons and/or calls to the police. However, as I began spending my days at the mission I started to realize how over-exaggerated my previous notions had been.

The people who come into the mission are not the harsh and frightening group that I had pictured in my mind. In fact, they are kind and caring people who unfortunately have circumstances in their lives which leave them unable to provide food for themselves and/or their families. And while some of them may have made negative choices in their lives, this does not define who they are or the area of town in which they reside. A strong trait I can see in the people who I have had the pleasure of meeting is strength. Strength in the fact that they are able to make it day to day even though they may not have a roof over their head or money in their pocket. Strength in the fact that they are able to set aside their pride and acknowledge the fact that they need help. And finally, strength in the fact that they are willing to keep their morals and faith when facing hard times even though it would be easier just to let them fall away.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked at the mission with Stuart, Chantal, and Bill. This job, and the people I have met during my time here, have proven that opinions about people should be based on first hand experience and not word of mouth. It has allowed me to meet people that I will surely miss seeing in my day-to-day routine and who I only wish the best for in life. I am also grateful for the mission in what it offers to the community. I have seen first hand how the mission makes a positive impact by offering patrons a safe area to seek warmth, food, and friendly conversation. It also offers the chance for people to seek counselling in times of trouble and, hopefully in the future, GED tutoring. I am glad to have been blessed with a summer experience that turned out to be so much more than a job. I will take the lessons I have learned with me and look forward to visiting in the future.