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BIOL - 407

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Final Thoughts

Service Learning and You

My service learning at C.A.R.L. has taught me a lot about animal behavior. It offers hands-on experience and understanding of behavior, by interacting with diverse dog breeds and different experiences each day. I detected various breeds responding to stimuli in unique ways revealing traits and temperaments. I observed nuanced communication cues, recognizing the importance of body language and vocalization when it came to walking and playtime in the arena. It allowed me to witness the impact of positive reinforcement on certain behaviors that highlight the importance of a nurturing environment. This experience deepened my understanding of the emotional lives of dogs.

I learned about myself throughout this experience. It revealed my compassion and patience to become stronger than before after interacting with various breeds of dogs that I have never been around. It allowed me to gain fearlessness in engaging with reactive animals and allowed me to get the chance of wanting to try a new experience to become adaptive. It reinforced my trust in people because the leads were able to trust me by engaging with a new dog that they believed I felt ready to meet. This experience had me uphold a deep sense of empathy, not just for animals but for the border community.

Volunteering at C.A.R.L. plays a pivotal role in my aspiration to become a veterinarian. It provides a valuable hands-on experience, perfecting my understanding of animal behavior,

medical needs, and the complexity of pet care. It exposed me to having to deal with diverse cases that required adaptability and problem-solving skills which are crucial in any medical practice. Building relationships with both animals and volunteers improved my communication skills leading to an interpersonal relationship that shares my passion for animal welfare to other individuals such as animal care workers, owners, and potential adopters.

I have been equipped with a spectrum of valuable skills. I've developed hands-on expertise in animal welfare by being able to guide the dogs using developed strength after having to grab various dog breeds at a hold to avoid a potential fight breaking out or having certain dogs chase after other species. As well as improving my training experience by allowing me to try different forms of positive reinforcement to manage various dog breeds. I've equipped myself to interpret non-verbal and verbal cues to ensure how a dog might behave towards another animal. Using a routined schedule fulfilled the sense of responsibility and efficiency

Devoting my time to this service learning experience has been a large commitment where I can share my compassion for the animals and transform them into contributions. I offered daily walking with various dogs while displaying love and attention towards them so that they gain trust. Additionally, I was able to provide a bag of treats for these dogs to share with other volunteers to bring joy and positive reinforcement to the animals.

Service Learning and Your Community

I learned a lot about the community at C.A.R.L. due to the volunteers, leaders, and other employees becoming involved a majority of the time. This community is deeply engaged in creating a vibrant atmosphere strictly dedicated to animal welfare. The rescue center encourages open communication among everyone, creating a supportive environment where experiences and insights can be shared. We are able to communicate on which dogs need assistance in showing

their emotions and often decide on which person would be the appropriate fit. Adoption events and other programs further interact with the rescue center with the goal of providing a new home for animals.

The socialization around dogs in the community could be changed. I believe that the reason why these dogs are so reactive towards each other is because they aren't allowed to engage closely in case of potential harm happening. These dogs potentially see other dogs and humans as predators resulting in outburst behaviors due to not exchanging any communication that they are a safe animal to trust. Animal welfare can affect a dog's mental and emotional state because they aren't used to high energy establishment so potentially finding a middle ground could improve communication.

The issue could be improved by having monitored interactions with the dogs that have a developed emotional state to work on having a close bond to others based on reactivity when they are playing in their cages. There could be monitored play time with multiple volunteers to assist in case a dog has an outburst towards another dog. Potentially having a volunteer trainer with a dog that is able to interact with each dog so that other dogs can observe how to establish a friendship.

Others could search in the area for dogs who specialize in helping other animals to settle into their emotional state that they were in beforehand. Others can create a team of monitors and evaluate which dogs are determined to pass the test of being next to another dog. This test can be based on how they react when coming into close contact on walks or in the arenas.

I continue to address animal welfare by continuously discussing with volunteers and leading to further recognition of the issue that could arise. Further discussion could potentially lead hiring professional trainers to investigate this potential issue.

C.A.R.L. can continue to attract more volunteers from my age group by posting on other social media apps like Tiktok, which is an app where any type of video could go viral and potentially raise awareness for a situation. Putting videos of the C.A.R.L. dogs will be a great idea to also showcase the dogs and how they behave in real life rather than pictures. Another way to attract more volunteers is to reach other local colleges or high schools to offer the class for people interested in working with animals. The volunteer system is at a pace where you are able to go in seven days a week of you choosing, it's a great way to start in volunteering to move into wanting to work with animals.