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Every day you come in contact with dozens of people. Some of these people you know well, but many of them you do not. At first, these people that you do not know really do not seem to have an effect on you; however if you look more critically and closely, maybe they do. Maybe they did something nice for you, like helping you pick up your dropped groceries or holding the door open for you. These small, kind and helpful actions may stay on your mind for the entire day because they are completely unexpected. Although you have no idea who that person was, they still had an impact on your life. Helping other has effects like this. You may be in a completely different country or on a different continent from the person you are helping, you still feel good helping them and they are probably grateful that someone cares. Both of you have been changed in a positive way. This is why I love to do charity and community service work because I know that by helping someone else, I get a huge benefit as well.

This is what I think about any time that I am doing any sort of charity work. Helping pass out sandwiches downtown with a church group in my community helped me see how such small things can impact people's lives. For me, it was an eye opening experience to see how many people came to get this food. To me, a sandwich is not something I would wait in a long line to get. I had never had to give necessities like food much thought. I have never struggled or gone through hardships like these people have. Seeing the things they have to do to meet basic needs and becoming aware of their unique situations showed me a side of life I had not been exposed to before. It not only allowed me to see how important it is to help those whom fate has not been kind to, but how important a small thing like a bagged lunch can be.

While I was downtown, we got chances to talk to people after the food was distributed. We would learn their names, their stories, and anything else they wanted to tell us. We would listen and tell them things about ourselves when they asked. All of the people that I meet were like me in some ways even though we were in very different situations. These people were not "bad" people, but merely people like me who had made mistakes or were incredibly unlucky. Everyone makes bad decisions at times and it is sad to meet people who made mistakes that now define their entire lives, mistakes that are difficult to recover from. These sandwiches were a tiny, little way that I could help give them a second chance, give them hope, and let them know people did care about them. Even though a sandwich is just a sandwich, it can inspire people and have a broader impact.

Conversing with people and finding that we had things in common led to a level of friendship with some of them. We would talk every time I went there and I would learn more about them, hearing about how they were trying to change their lives one baby step at a time. We made secret handshakes and hugged each other when it was time for my group to pack up into the church van and leave. On particularly hot days, we would even chase each other around the parking lot with water guns we had brought. I noticed that many people were just as engaged as I was and it amazed me to see how strong the bonds were between people who only see each other for a few hours, one day per week. They would know little details about these people's lives that I would not even know about some of my best friends. Looking around,

almost everyone had a smile on his or her face. It occurred to me that this is how you help make the world a better place; you have genuine interactions with people and try to help with small gestures and begin to see that we have far more similarities than differences.