

Interview with Katrin Stinson 3/16/26

What was your service-learning placement, and for what class?

My service-learning placement was with Right Care Alliance. It was required for *MHEO 465 Health Advocacy, Community Organizing & Innovation*.

What kind of work did you do as part of that placement?

I was one of the many volunteer supporters at Right Care Alliance. Volunteer supporters took on whatever tasks were available in support of an activism event. I would attend meetings at the Cambridge office, meetings led by an event project manager. At the time I joined Right Care Alliance, an event to march at a Cambridge pharmaceutical that was charging market rates for insulin. The project manager was the Director of Organizing and Training. At each meeting the Director would run through a list of open tasks for the project and volunteers would sign up for whatever tasks they felt they could do. A task came up for location reconnaissance for the march site. It was to identify parking locations, parking prices and on-site security. I visited the march site and took photos of garages and price lists and documented security personnel. Additionally, volunteers were asked to make signs to carry for the protest and to distribute flyers to publicize the march. I took part in both of these tasks. I printed and distributed flyers in my neighborhood and built signs.

What was your experience engaging with the communities you worked with?

Distributing the flyers in my neighborhood was a challenge for me. I didn't know my neighbors very well, even though I had moved in two years ago. So, I treated this task as an opportunity to introduce myself. I got a mix of reactions. Some neighbors politely listened to me and took my flyer and some refused to open their door to me. In the end, I don't think any of my neighbors attended the march. I wasn't disappointed in their response. I was disappointed that I hadn't taken the time earlier to introduce myself to my neighbors, let them get to know me, which would have helped in making them feel comfortable in talking to me about the march.

What impact did service learning have on your education?

I acquired an appreciation for the amount of work required to motivate people to participate in a civic action. Many people support many causes. However, there's a significant gap between supporting a cause with a check and supporting a cause with activism. Also, I learned that activism begins locally. My public health studies introduced me to fantastic figures in the public health. However, I am now aware that those figures became fantastic through their relationships with others in their environment, i.e. family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, etc. Relationship development must be included in your plans for success. You simply can't do it alone.

How has service learning at Simmons informed your professional development? How has/did it change your perspective moving forward?

Service learning did inform my path in public health. After that experience with Right Care Alliance, I decided that I would be most productive and supportive of causes as an actor "behind the scenes". There are many people who want to make social change, but such change requires, among other things, organization, planning, risk management, and communication. My skills are in those areas. Those are areas that will support me in my pursuits in public health.