Keelin and Stephanie: Night Duty #1

Our shelter experience exceeded our expectations. We anxiously waited for eight forty five when we were supposed to head upstairs. We were greeted by many friendly residents along with our peers who were finishing cupcake decorations. We then received a brief description of our expected performance from the day- time volunteers. One of the workers walked us through the dorms, and many of the women were sleeping or preparing to do so. Most of the residents welcomed us in and were happy to say goodnight. There was one exception, where we overheard one of the women inquiring about our business being in her dorm. The volunteer informed us that she thinks this woman has an inexplicable problem with her, and it is best to simply ignore her attitude. Other than this minor dissatisfaction, the residents were very welcoming and seemed to enjoy conversing with us just as anyone else would. For the two hours before bed time, we watched television and talked with the ladies. Most of them seemed exhausted, which may explain why they declined to participate in our proposed game of UNO. After we went to sleep, the night continued uneventfully until our seven am alarm woke us up. We then announced that was it was time to wake up to each of the three dorms. For the next two hours women came into the office individually to get medications, and called the office after smoking to be buzzed in from outside. Our overall experience was beneficial and helped us to gain insight into the life of homeless women. Of course, such a short experience is not completely representative of the entirety of the homeless female population, yet, it was a beneficial experience in gaining perspective and eradicating and lingering stereotypical notions. Our only regret was that our volunteer experience did not involve as much interaction with the residents as one who is looking for insight would hope, but it was inappropriate to pry too far into their personal lives. The shelter experience proved invaluable in understanding homelessness.