

For my first observation I went to The Oakmont Retirement facility for lunch on March 31. After introducing myself to the management and staff, I sat down at a table in the dining room with two very friendly residents. The person I interviewed was Pete Hanson. Pete is a very energetic and outgoing ninety-year-old man who was very happy to have company at lunch, and was happy to answer any questions I had.

When I first walked in to the establishment, I noticed that the dining room was set just to the right of the entry, and was very sunny pleasant place. On the wall by the entrance to the dining room was a board which had a daily menu written on it. Also, set on all the tables was a monthly menu so the residents were informed as to what was on the menu each day. For convenience, and preference, alternate meal options were also served, things like baked chicken or Jell-O salad.

At this meal, Pete chose the Jell-o to start, the steak and onions with mashed potatoes and green beans for an entrée. He also had a dinner roll and for dessert a “chocolate delight” which was chocolate mouse with shortbread cookie. He had a very healthy appetite and completely cleaned his plate. He also really likes coffee and had two or three cups just while I was sitting there.

As we sat and conversed I asked how they liked the food that was served and what they knew about nutrition and the kind of things that they should eat. He said overall the food wasn't too bad. They mostly ate there, but every once in a while they would go out for a special treat. He said that when he first moved to The Oakmont he lost some weight, and since then has been conscious of eating to keep his weight consistent. The knowledge of nutrition is

minimal, as he said he hadn't learned about that sort of thing since he was in school many years ago. He also mentioned that he ate what he wanted to, what he liked, and tried to stay away from what he disliked. Mostly he ate things that he knew his body could handle, what he could digest easily. For example, he knows that he can't digest iceberg lettuce, so he doesn't eat it. He also eats until he is full, not stuffed, but what he feels like his body needs. His eating habits go back to when he was a child and he was raised eating five meals a day.

As for the program itself as a congregate meal site, this program offers much to the residents of the facility. It offers close, convenient and safe meals to those who otherwise may have difficulty getting what they need. It offers not only nutritious food, but also a warm and caring environment in which they can feel safe and welcome. They are able to mingle and talk to their friends and fellow residents. The social aspect is just as important as the nutritional aspect. For example, one gentleman who joined our table had just been at another facility recovering from an illness. He was very quiet and seemed unhappy at first. But after sitting there for a bit he opened up, started smiling and chatting with everyone at the table. He explained how terrible the food was at this other facility and how he was glad to be back with his friends and eating tasty food again.

Another good thing about the facility was that it was part of a corporate chain. When I first got to the Oakmont, I talked to the management and asked them a few questions. They said that being a part of a corporation, they get the menu and recipes sent to them. At the headquarters there is a registered dietitian and chefs who carefully prepare the menus. So the people who chose to live and dine at these facilities are well taken care of. Looking at the print out of the nutrient consumed just for lunch it seems that Pete is well on his way to good nutrition. He has lots of vitamins and minerals included in his diet, as well as adequate protein

and calorie intake. (Although the nutrient needs according to the print out may not be entirely accurate because I had to guess his height and weight for the calculations.)

For my second observation I went to the Associated Student Child Development Lab on campus. This observation was a little more difficult because there was no interaction with the child, I was watching from afar, with slightly hindered audio and visual of the child. I was also only able to observe for breakfast just after they started to eat. My observation, however was useful and a learning experience. The child I was able to observe was Jaden, a five and a half year old boy. When I first arrived in the observation room he was sitting at the table with two other children and adult (student) supervising. They had already started the meal, but only a moment before I entered the room.

One of the first things I noticed when I started to watch the kids eat, was what they were eating and the interaction with the food. They were eating whole-wheat toast that was lightly buttered, as well as orange slices. The kids were also drinking milk, which was served in small cups, which seemed to be easier for the kids to hold and drink from. The kids were also given the opportunity to pour their own milk, when they wanted more they were helped by the student to pour their own milk.

Another big part of the breakfast experience for Jaden was how the other two kids at the table were acting. The other little boy at the table was very distracting by being loud and moving around a lot. He was trying to distract Jaden by talking in his face and walking around the table. The little girl at the table was busy eating and talking to the female student who was supervising their activities. Jaden did really well with the distractions. He seemed very quiet and focused on eating until he was full, then he seemed to lose focus and started to interact

with the other little boy. When they were finished at the table they helped to put their things in the trash and then they went to the other room to wash their hands.

Although I only was able to observe Jaden for breakfast, based on what we have learned in class he seems to be eating what he should be. On the printout of just this one meal, he is already getting plenty of vitamins and minerals, as well as protein and other nutrients. While I was unable to observe what and how much was consumed for lunch, the lab posts the weekly menu up for us to look at when we enter the lab. That afternoon the children were going to be having a nutritious and colorful lunch consisting of: ranch beans, grated cheese, whole-wheat tortillas, fresh broccoli, fresh sliced pears, and 2% milk. For a snack they were scheduled to have yogurt with sliced fresh apple.

I believe that the meal was a learning experience for the children. First of all the kids were able to pour their own milk. This helped them with hand eye coordination, as well as understanding what they wanted. They knew they wanted more milk, so they got to be a judge of how much they got. While eating, the student who was supervising was very involved in the meal. She helped them to get the food they wanted/needed, as well as talked to them and interacted with the kids while they ate. She answered their questions and let them help serve and clean up after themselves.

While these children were eating, the other children in the program were spread out over the room playing in different areas, in a relatively calm and quiet atmosphere. After the three children were finished eating, all the children were gathered together and they went outside to play. The level of excitement of the kids grew as they all seemed to anticipate playing outdoors.