For the fall semester of 2002, I volunteered at the Animal Care League of Oak Park. I chose this partner because I love animals, and I think any organization providing homes for animals that otherwise would be put to sleep is very worthwhile. Loving animals is one thing that I do very well, and being able to go to a shelter and walk dogs and play with cats has been a very educational experience.

Walking dogs seemed easy enough; I had a dog myself so I didn’t think it would be that hard. At that time I didn’t realize the deeper meaning to taking these very affectionate dogs on a walk. Going into this volunteering experience, I really didn’t know what to expect. Because I had never volunteered my time at any organization, I was a little apprehensive. I had done some volunteer work, but nothing of this magnitude. I hoped I was able to do everything correctly, and I would make a good impression.

One surprise I had was over the appearance of the shelter. When we went there for orientation there were only three dogs. I thought that there would be at least twenty dogs clawing at their cages. The shelter was not what I had expected, but for the most part I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

My future behavior will hopefully change because of my service learning experience. I will try to become a more compassionate person, and not think of myself as much. Loving for animals is something I already know how to do, and I want to take that love and expand it to other aspects of my life. My decisions for the most part already are
rational, and have great consideration. As I progress in life, my important decisions will be made not only in terms of how it will affect me, but how it was affect others. It seems strange to get this idea from walking a few dogs, but I see it as much more than that. I see it as saving a life, and letting that life know that someone out there understands and cares for them. Dogs may not be able to communicate with us as we’d like them to, but when they lick your face you know that you are doing something right.