



THE TERRACES

AT SAN JOAQUIN GARDENS

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LIFE OF SERVICE AND CARE LEADS TO CAREER PATH

Young Man Overcomes Obstacles to Serve Seniors and Follow in Family Footsteps

FRESNO, Calif.: In a time of shaky economic growth and uncertain opportunities, many young people are left scratching their heads as they try to determine a career path. At age 19, Aaron Freeman is not one of those people. He's known almost his whole life that what he wants to do most is serve seniors at The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens, a continuing care retirement community in Fresno.

"When I was about eight years old, my mom encouraged me to volunteer in the health care center at The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens," said Freeman. "I spent many summers and hours after school socializing, playing games, taking residents on ice cream outings and to the movies."

Freeman has practically grown up at the local retirement community because his mother has worked there for 17 years, first as a certified nursing assistant and now as a licensed practical nurse, but even before that, he was no stranger to medical care surroundings. Freeman was born with spina bifida, which has caused him to spend nearly as much time receiving care as he has spent giving it.

"I've been there and experienced it on both sides," said Freeman. "I can relate to being tired of taking medication or getting woken up for checkups. But it's also made me stronger, and it gives me compassion for what some people go through. I'm passionate about what I do at The Terraces, and feel it's my way of giving back."

In addition to his mother working at The Terraces, Freeman's great-aunt also works with residents in The Grove, a dedicated memory support area at The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens. He said his family's attitude toward caregiving has had a major impact on his own career goals.

"When I was volunteering, I spent a lot of time watching my mom and how she treated residents and how they respected her. She melted the hearts of residents, families and everyone she worked with," said Freeman. "I saw the passion and happiness in her eyes, and I felt it and wanted a piece of it."

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Freeman began working at The Terraces in dining services, and he was a favorite among the residents. A year later, Freeman was promoted to resident assistant at The Grove. But the move was not popular among everyone.

“When Aaron left dining services to work in memory support, there were many residents who were disappointed they wouldn’t see him every day. He really understands customer service, and is always attentive to providing the best service possible,” said Jessica Lopez, Executive Director for The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens. “Everyone here knows Aaron’s name, and even residents with memory issues recognize his face.”

“I love talking with residents and learning about their careers, if they were married and about their families, what their passions are, and other exciting parts of their lives,” said Freeman.

In addition to his position at The Terraces, Freeman is currently a full-time student at Fresno City College, and plans to eventually transfer to California State University in Fresno, to earn his degree as a registered nurse.

“The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens is willing to teach, guide and mentor me,” said Freeman. “Since deciding that this is the path I want to take, I’m more focused, I have a plan of action, and I’m more excited about going to school. This is definitely where I want to be and what I want to be doing in my future.”

The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens is committed to enriching the lives of older adults. For more than 40 years, the community, located at 5555 North Fresno Street, has delivered one of the most engaging lifestyles in the area. In addition to residential living, the community offers residents access to a full continuum of on-site assisted living, memory support and skilled nursing. For more information about The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens, call (559) 435-1999 or visit www.TheTerracesAtSanJoaquin.com.

The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens in Fresno, California, is managed by ABHOW, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation. ABHOW is a nonsectarian corporation, serving seniors through quality retirement housing since 1949. A licensing application for Phase II has been filed with and approved by the Department of Social Services of the State of California. State of California License #100400544, #040000142. Certificate of Authority #102.

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