

## Personal Essay for GSWSM Scholarships – Jennifer Morack

I am passionate about working with older adults. In high school, my love for older people led me to seek out volunteer opportunities at a local senior center where I helped at monthly dinner dances for the members. It was then that I knew I would have a career in the aging field. While in college at the University of Michigan studying psychology, I also volunteered weekly for a couple of years at a local retirement community where I would visit with the residents and help with social activities, including exercise and the resident favorite game of bingo. I loved my time with the residents and appreciated even more how interesting and diverse older adults are.

I graduated college in 2009 and then entered into a doctoral program at Penn State in human development and family studies to pursue research on the health and well-being of older adults. However, I decided that my true passion is working with/to help seniors in a more applied capacity. My master's and graduate education taught me many valuable things about the aging process and the importance of empirical research, but I am happiest when I am actually working in a more direct capacity to aid and empower older adults. I was able to realize this throughout my continued volunteer experiences including various volunteer opportunities I organized when I was the community outreach chair of my graduate student steering committee for two years and also through my volunteering at an adult day care from March 2013 to July 2014.

After spending time teaching and doing research at Penn State, I decided last fall to apply to master's of social work (MSW) programs and became admitted into the University of Michigan Social Work program for this fall semester. I feel that a social work education and career will provide me with an opportunity to translate my social concerns into a profession. Despite my positive perception of seniors, I see how overlooked older people are in our society, and I want to work to change that. I think that most people would like to live comfortably and well in their last years of life, but the marginalization of older adults has contributed to a lack of programs and policies aimed at providing for and promoting the health and well-being of this group.

In the future, I would like a career working to advocate for older adults and working on policies and programs that address their needs. With the Baby Boomers entering into old age, the number of older adults in our country is going to increase tremendously over the next couple decades. We have to act now in order to make sure that resources are in place to provide for a comfortable and high quality life for every older adult. That is a lofty goal, but one that I am excited to help with in my work as a social worker.