



International Volunteer Day

Happy International Volunteer Day 2018!!!!

Today, December 5th, is International Volunteer Day, as selected by the United Nations. It is a moment in which volunteers and organizations can share and celebrate their work and efforts. At Gustolab International, we are proud to work with local partners in Rome to provide volunteering opportunities to our students. This semester, our students at GLi had the chance to volunteer with AIUTO AI BISOGNOSI S. Marcella in Rome. Specifically, they helped distribute food to homeless people near the Ostiense Train Station in Rome.

Here are some student observations from their experiences:

"Volunteering with AIUTO AI BISOGNOSI S. Marcella in Rome has been a valuable learning and life experience. Not only have I had the chance to make new friends from all sorts of backgrounds, but I've also been able to give back to others who are in need, which has been extremely gratifying. These weekly food drives are an excellent way to make use of Rome's excessive food waste and help make the city's food system a bit more sustainable. Helping low-income, struggling individuals to get back on their feet has established within me a sense of appreciation and awareness for the resources and I have in my life. I have enjoyed working one-on-one with local Italians to help the surrounding community while also having the chance to practice my Italian language a bit! I think it is important that everyone find an outlet through which they can volunteer, it really brings out the humanity in people." – Anna Seweryniak

"Volunteering through the Gustolab was such a rewarding opportunity. I gained a new perspective on the city I have been calling home for the past few months and it made me feel more connected with Rome and Roman people."- Ava Blumberg.

"I loved volunteering for the Gustolab in Rome. It gave me the opportunity to learn more about different communities in Rome by talking to people who worked for the organization. It also showed me different sides of Rome which I would not have seen without this opportunity." – Liza Kiernan

It is clear that volunteering has many benefits for all involved, but volunteering abroad brings forth a whole new skill set. Those involved get to see the reality of a place as it is, not the tourist side of life that many visitors take for truth. By seeing things through the eyes of locals, this opens the doors for



a deep cultural immersion. Students are able to give back to the community in which they are involved in, leave their mark and connect with others. Not to mention, while gaining a wide range of transferable skills. Other than obvious language skills, students also develop in softer skills, such as cultural understanding & engagement, problem solving & multidisciplinary thinking, responsibility & flexibility. Students develop their global competence, as they become increasingly aware of the reality of the world around them, and through critical thinking and action, become players in this global environment. The notion of ethical and social responsibility also becomes a reality for the international volunteer, and borders melt away.