Kingsley Manor Retirement Community located at West Hollywood of Southern California is a non-profit nursing home. The historical red brick wall makes the building so unique and stunning. It was a typical Southern California day with breeze and sunshine. Dinning rooms, gymnasium, movie rooms, rooftop patio, and library are all available and free for the residents. Their dinning room looks like a buffet restaurant with both electronic and paper menus. Activity rooms seem very warm and cozy. I met and interviewed Ms. Viktoria Selmser, Life Enrichment Director of Kingsley Manor.

Ms. Selmser received her bachelor's degree in international relations and foreign affairs in 2005 when she was in Hungary. Because her husband is American, she moved to the U.S. eight years ago. On the journey of job hunting, one day, she walked into a nursing home and was attracted to the beautiful and lovely environment, she applied and was offered a position as activity coordinator. Education is imperative, as Ms. Selmser emphasized. She is going to attend a 6-week social work training program at Kingsley Manor next month, and will have continuing study at USC Davis School of Gerontology. Ms. Selmser has an Activity Leader Certificate of specialization in S.H.A.R.P, which stands for Skills for Healthy Aging Resources and Programs and an R.C.F.E. Administrator Certificate. Kingsley Manor has three parts: assisted living, skilled nursing, and independent living. Ms. Selmser takes charge of the transportation for the residents, plans field trips to the beach, shopping day, concerts, holiday celebrations, manages volunteers' work, etc.

Kingsley Manor has been known for its diversity. Compare to the other nursing homes, Kingsley Manor has more residents who have different nationalities. The campus was built in 1912, the unique history and beautiful building makes it stands out. It is also a site that has often been used to shoot movie and TV shows. Other than these, what makes Ms. Selmser loves most about working at Kingsley Manor is that her mission to create a great environment for the residents, she makes sure that high-quality services are being delivered. The community wants them to be known for the dignity and respect that the resident receives, and the residents are active and engaged in the community. One of the unique issues of this community is that there is no private parking lot; staff, residents, and visitors sometimes take more than half an hour to find a parking spot on the street. Other issues are related to building's maintenance because the building is over one hundred years old.

Hiring good people has been a hot topic, and I was also interested in how Ms. Selmser thinks of that; when she interviews people who seek a job at nursing homes, she cares about their education and experience. Employees must have a strong educational background and at least one year of volunteer experience in serving in nursing homes; employees must understand the aging process, physically and mentally. She also likes employees who are punctual and who take action before the others. When she leads the team, there are also some problems relate to the different ages of the employees. Employees at various ages understand things and do things differently. Sometimes older employees tend to take more time when finishing up a task, but they all complete their work very well. Ms. Selmser's leadership style is participative. Their team holds monthly meetings; they discuss the upcoming events and issues occurred during the last month. She treats her team members fairly and respectful, and she has high expectations from them. She wants all the team members to take this job seriously because they are making differences in some persons' lives. She also learned that it is always good to let employees know that they did a good job; one example is that she had a party and celebrated for one of her employees who passed a driving test.

In order to make a better community, Ms. Selmser's plan for growth in the next couple years is to keep getting education for herself and her employees. She will lead her team members to take chair yoga course and get certificated on mindful meditation. Ms. Selmser told me that her motivation is knowing that she is making a difference in people's life. The average age in the community is mid-80s; it's the last stage of their life, and she wants to make the residents comfortable and happy living there.

For students and people who love to serve in the gerontology field, Ms. Selmser recommends Alzheimer's Association, Arthritis Foundation to obtain new information and Aging: Concepts and Controversies and The Age of Dignity will be good books to read. She also suggests that people who look for a job should do research about the company or community that he/she is applying. At the end of the interview, Ms. Selmser emphasized that people who work in the gerontology field must have a beautiful heart that truly cares about the elderly to accompany them to their end of life.

It was such a great experience and my honor to talk to Ms. Selmser and listen to her story. During the interview and from her words, I strongly feel her passion, enthusiasm, and her beautiful heart for the elderly.