

For those of you who don't know (and those of you who forgot) my name is Beth De Vries and I believe in recognizing the people who do the dirty work.

How many of you live in a dorm or a building here on campus? How many of you have to clean your own bathrooms? Exactly. Not many (or none) of us. Now think about the people who have to clean them every week. Do you know what they look like? What their names are? I know I certainly didn't last year. I took them for granted. I thought, "They're here to clean up. It's their job. I'll just let them do it. Don't bother them. They can do their thing and I'll do mine."

It wasn't until this summer that I realized how arrogant that was. During break, I worked as a janitor cleaning toilets, and from personal experience, I can say it's much better when someone thanks you or at least acknowledges your existence. When you're literally cleaning up after someone, it's nice to know they appreciate it.

Now, I'm not trying to say shame on you for being exactly the way I was last year and I'm certainly not trying to say I'm better than you now. I just want to say that sometimes it's better to take a moment and realize that there are people in this world that are not appreciated as much as they should be. Janitors, waiters and waitresses, landscapers, and I've heard people who work in fast food don't get treated the best either.

Also keep in mind that these people clean up after you and they can seriously mess with your life and you will have no idea. I read a confession on "Whisper" the other day. For those of you who don't know what "Whisper" is, it's a confessional website where people can confess things-sometimes terrible or even astonishing-and the general population can see it. I found one the other day that said "I hate working as a janitor for high-and-mighty rich people, so I clean their computer keyboards with the toilet brush." This may not be something that applies to you necessarily, but we've definitely all heard about waiters and waitresses spitting in people's food. I'm simply saying don't be the person who makes them want to do that.

Rena, Brenda, Maria, and Ronda. These are the names of the cleaning staff for the section of my house. I challenge all of you to take a moment every once in a while and think about someone you rely on all the time but never really take the time to appreciate. Get to know the people who clean your bathrooms. If it's only by name or by face that's still a step in the right direction. Maybe leave a note of thanks for the cleaning staff. Take a second to say thanks to someone in Central Market or Fred's. Just take a moment to focus on someone outside of your normal circle of vision.

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