

Brandon Baum | The Other Way Ministries

Throughout my time working over the summer at The Other Way Ministries I have learned a lot of life skills but also personal and spiritual skills. This is my second time being an ambassador for this program working at ICCF a couple of years ago to switch over to The Other Way this past summer. As a student at a Christian College, I felt like stepping back into the mission role was a good fit for me and it felt like something I was called to do. The life skills of this job were much more than I could have asked. I worked with people experiencing homelessness (serving them food, providing them with someone to talk to, etc.) along with so many small trades work such as plumbing, painting, contracting, and other work. These life skills are something that I will be bringing into my life further on making the work a win-win as I get to serve and learn. Additionally, I learned many spiritual and faith growing skills by seeing the heart posture of my coworkers, building a personal devotion to ministry work and understanding the gratitude of every person even when having next to nothing. These skills were built up through the hours of working there but there were a couple of moments that stood out to me the most.

I believe that the most significant days for me were the Wednesdays at the Other Way. Wednesdays was the day that we did a program called “Recharge”, this program involves opening our doors to the people experiencing homelessness of the westside of Grand Rapids to serve a meal inside while there are shower trucks and other amenities where available outside. While working the Recharge program, I was able to learn a little bit about what the homeless community looks like and even connected with some of the attendees. During one particular Wednesday, a man came in with a very cheery look on his face. This day I was feeling a little sluggish and tired, but I couldn’t help but ask the man how he was doing. The man replied with “I’m doing wonderful man; God woke me up today”. Those words were all I needed to hear to perk up. How can someone with next to nothing be so happy? The answer was right there, God. From that moment on, I repeat those words whenever I’m feeling discouraged or unmotivated. While I could share countless other stories while on the job, this story stuck out to me because it is something that I will carry on into my future going back to school.

This job raised my heart for ministry more as I worked there. Through the gratitude of my neighbors such as the previous story and many other encounters with people in my community, my work felt like I was making a real difference. This was a feeling that I longed for as someone who has worked at pizza places and golf courses that felt monotonous and unrewarding. And as I enter a period of searching for a career building job this is going to be a large focus of mine.

Lastly, through this job I had the opportunity to study the book “Tattoos on the Heart” by Gregory Boyle. This book was an excellent and encouraging book as I worked in the inter-city this summer. This book highlighted the idea of Kinship which was a word I never really thought about. This word simply means the community built just by your presence. The idea that being there for someone is enough to show the love of God. This idea has really stuck with me when dealing with people who might be going through something hard. Overall, If kinship and the spirit of God is all you have, then that is all you need.