

Dane Fitzgibbon | ICCF

Over the summer, I had the opportunity to work for a non-profit organization in downtown Grand Rapids called ICCF. Their mission is to buy old houses around town and flip them to make them into affordable living spaces for people with lower incomes. While I worked for them, I learned about the many different parts of ICCF that help make the organization run smoothly, as well as actually working on the houses with other volunteers.

While working there, one of my favorite parts of the job was getting to see some of the finished houses that we had previously worked on. At the start of my time there, Mrs. Baas took me around to some of the new builds that had recently been finished. When I first saw them, it was really cool to see the brand-new work, but it wasn't as special because I hadn't seen what shape they were in. But, towards the end of my time, I had the privilege of seeing houses that were barely livable to being transformed into beautiful, finished homes fit for a family. Seeing the finished product was incredible.

Another fun part of volunteering for ICCF was the interactions with my co-workers and getting to know them better. One co-worker I enjoyed was a woman who had been a resident of the Alger Heights area where ICCF was located for almost her whole life. It was really interesting to hear how the area had changed over the years and learn stories about different businesses in the area. Through working with co-workers like this and hearing how the area had gentrified, I learned about how hard it actually is right now to either rent or buy a home. When a non-profit like ICCF is invested in a community, it is exciting to see how many people they help.

Overall, my experiences working for ICCF impacted me greatly in terms of learning how many working parts there are in non-profits, showing me how absurdly expensive the housing market is, and also inspiring me to look into a career path similar to some of the things ICCF does. Finally, at the start of the summer, I did not want to do the GVN program, but as I participated, I really started to enjoy it and looked forward to going to work. So, to any high schooler in the future who might be on the fence about doing this program, I would highly recommend going for it! You do not know what God has in store for you.