

Sam DeJong | Degage

This summer, I had the opportunity to serve in several different areas at Dégagé Ministries. Dégagé Ministries is a women's homeless shelter with two buildings that support both short-term and long-term homelessness. They provide affordable food, clothing, and all other necessities. They also have a retail bakery that sells cookies, cupcakes, coffee, and bagels. On Sundays, I worked in the kitchen prepping dinner for the residents and cleaning up lunch. Monday through Thursday, I worked on maintenance and kept the building clean. I also stocked the bathrooms with paper towels, toilet paper, and soap, and ensured the trash cans were empty. On Fridays, I worked in the retail space where I sold cookies, cupcakes, bagels, coffee, and pop.

I did a lot of different things throughout my time at Dégagé, but some of my favorite moments were when I was working at the food truck. For the food truck, I went with one of my managers to a place that stores donated food, and we loaded the truck with food and delivered it back to Dégagé. When we came back, a cook came out and decided what we would take. After everything was separated, we delivered the extra food to another program called Matthew's House, where we gave them all the food we had left in the truck. This felt very special because I got to see how much the people appreciated the food we brought to them.

I was greatly impacted by everything that happened during this summer at Dégagé. I could see how people were a little bit trapped at Dégagé. Because of how comfortable the housing is, the residents aren't feeling compelled to try and go out and make a living for themselves. I was also impacted by how all of the employees there were happy to be working there because of the work that they were doing. They all truly enjoy working to provide aid to those in need.

This summer, the Glenn Van Noord group read a book called Tattoos on the Heart by Gregory Boyle. I thought that the book was very interesting and inspiring. It showed me that even just one person can make a huge difference throughout their life. I was really inspired by just how much Greg cared and worked to make his area a better place for everyone. I found it very interesting that all of the different gang members could set aside their differences as soon as they got jobs and started working together. I also thought that it was very cool that the different programs came from different needs that the people had.

Throughout the summer, I had many different experiences while serving at Dégagé Ministries, and I learned a lot from these experiences. Working at Dégagé Ministries had a very positive impact on my life, and I learned lessons I wouldn't have if I hadn't been there.