

## Dégagé Ministries | Allie Edwards

Dégagé Ministries came to Thornapple and conducted a housing simulation. During the simulation, we all received a role. Each person received an annual wage, number of children, and other factors that may be important when dealing with homelessness. The sheer frustration I felt was overwhelming as we cycled through the simulation due to how my character was treated. The simulation was eye-opening to the daily reality and struggles of those dealing with homelessness and the stigma surrounding it.

After the housing simulation, I learned about the GVN program and was ecstatic. I wanted to get involved in Dégagé, but I never knew how. It was the best decision I could have made. The GVN program helps teens get involved in an impactful way.

I was fortunate enough to experience all areas of Dégagé and how beneficial they are. Firstly, I worked in the wellness center, where we offered showers, lockers, and haircuts. While working at the wellness center I saw how much of my daily life I took for granted. Thrift On Div was a blessing to everyone who came to Dégagé. The thrift store was filled with laughter, the latest fashions, and dreams for the future. I also worked in the kitchen where we served 3 meals a day from donations only. I saw such creativity and love from all the cooks trying their best to make sure everyone was satisfied with their food and that their dietary needs were met.

My experience at Dégagé has been phenomenal. I have been met with open arms by staff and patrons alike. I cannot even start to express the amount of love I have for everyone I have met at Dégagé, especially the patrons. Every morning, they consistently make me smile; though it seems small, their kindness is overwhelming, even when dealing with difficult situations. Through their hardships, what stands out to me are their acts of kindness. Such as carrying a tray, getting someone coffee, or just being there for others makes my heart so full. Dégagé has connected me with my faith by seeing the patrons' faith and trust in God. In stressful and painful situations, they would be praising God endlessly.

My experience at Dégagé has shown me how much I take for granted and how many misconceptions there are about those dealing with homelessness. There are a multitude of reasons that someone may end up without housing. Through this summer, I have learned that God can use anyone and in any situation for his kingdom.