

Dégagé Ministries | Langston Holquist

This summer I had the opportunity to work in the kitchen at Dégagé Ministries. Dégagé is an organization that serves unhoused people in downtown Grand Rapids. Inside Dégagé people can get affordable meals, take showers, get clothes, reading glasses, and other essentials. In addition to this, they can get assistance with building resumes, finding jobs, getting IDs, and other things that unhoused people may struggle with doing on their own. They also have a women's shelter upstairs. Dégagé's goal is to help people get themselves back on their feet, so they provide lots of jobs that people can do to get money for food and other resources they would want.

While I was working at Dégagé, I was in the kitchen from 7am to 1pm. I would serve breakfast, then make and serve lunch. I really enjoyed working with the people who were working there, they were nice and trusted me to do the right thing while cooking and serving. I was also able to talk to the people we served and get to know them a little bit, and they were usually very friendly. I really enjoyed the work I got to do, I enjoy cooking and being around people, so being able to do that was great. It could also be challenging, but usually it was challenging in a good way. Most of the time, we decided what we were going to make for lunch as we were making it, so if we were making something that would go good with salad, I would have to make a salad with whatever vegetables we had at the time. Sometimes that salad would be just okay, but sometimes the salad would be really good;.I just really enjoyed the problem solving I got to do. However, not everything I had to do was fun. One of the days, we were pretty light on food in the walk in fridge, so we decided that it would be a good day to take all the shelves out and clean the floors. The smell that came from the floor when we moved the shelves is one of the worst I have ever smelled. Cleaning the floor wasn't easy either because there was this thick black substance caked on to the floor which took a lot of effort to scrub out. Thankfully, not every task was that awful, and even when the jobs were awful, it felt good to be helping.

Working at Dégagé was one of the best experiences I've ever had. It was so great to be able to meet and get to know people who live a very different life than me. It felt truly amazing to be able to give my time to a cause I believe in and help people in a meaningful way. I'm so grateful I had this opportunity to help others, and I'm looking forward to doing similar volunteer work in the future.