

The Other Way Ministries | Mars Steenwyk

This past summer, I was blessed with the opportunity to help those in need living on the west side of Grand Rapids. Through the Glenn VanNoord program, I lent a helping hand to The Other Way Ministries, a faith-based non-profit in downtown Grand Rapids. The Other Way helps guide families in need toward spiritual direction, relationship growth, and economic stability through a diverse range of services, programs, and classes. Their services include a fresh market with flexible pricing for accessible food, a food pantry devoted to supplying food to families in need, low-cost counseling, early childhood education, and other youth services.

My role at The Other Way changed on a day-to-day basis. Typically, I worked at the food pantry. My responsibilities included restocking the shelves, taking shipments, and walking people through the pantry. Every morning, I would arrive at 9am to restock shelves and refrigerators to prepare for the day. At about 9:50, the supervisors and volunteers would gather for a morning prayer which was a great way to start the day. Once the clock struck 10, I would be greeted by a flood of customers, who soon became familiar neighbors to me.

One of the best parts about working at The Other Way was getting to know the people. All of the volunteers and supervisors have amazing stories to share and inspiring faiths. The staff are patient and excellent listeners, who make everyone feel welcomed and loved. Everyone at The Other Way is considered a "neighbor" which creates a sense of unconditional love and support for our community. Another takeaway I had from this internship was vastly improving my Spanish. Most of the staff are bilingual and about 25% of our customers were primarily Spanish speaking so I was challenged to learn every day.

Overall, working at the other way made me feel thankful and fulfilled because I was able to grow my faith and act on what God called me to do. Helping homeless people made me grateful for all the little things I usually take for granted. After arriving home from The Other Way, I would always thank God for my car, warm home, food in my refrigerator, and my cozy mattress. My perspective on life will forever be changed after realizing the luxuries and opportunities I am blessed with. I would highly recommend the Glenn VanNoord Urban Missions Program because it provides an opportunity to help those in need and grow your faith.