

Internship Reflection – Makenzie Mann

I have always been actively involved in my community, from volunteering for the Robotics Team at the middle school I attended, to being President of the Red Cross Chapter at my school, to volunteering at DuPage Children's Museum and Naper Settlement. Being involved in the community and knowing that I'm able to make a difference in someone's life is such a rewarding feeling, and as such, being able to intern at Loaves & Fishes was a great window into how an organization itself can be dedicated to helping uplift a community. Furthermore, I hope to eventually go into the nonprofit sector, likely working in nonprofit management. As such, being able to intern at Loaves & Fishes was an incredibly rewarding honor that allowed me to understand what such a job entails!

This past week, I had a wonderful time volunteering, learning about the organization, and meeting the staff and volunteers that make L&F so great! Above all, I learned just how much passion can change lives. Loaves & Fishes started out serving a few families and operated out of a church- and now it has grown to serve over 800 families each week and has two warehouse spaces. This enormous growth is all because everyone at Loaves & Fishes is incredibly passionate about what they do. From working in the market with Janie, Jenny, and Cheryl, to setting up a mobile food pantry with George, Paul, Ronnie, Bob, and Nancy, everyone that I met was happy to be serving their community, and loved what they were doing and who they were doing it with. The volunteer family at L&F is so close knit and welcoming. It's always amazing to see how many volunteers are wearing Loaves & Fishes branded shirts, indicating that they have served over 100 hours in a year! Additionally, not only are the volunteers at L&F passionate and selfless, the staff are too. I had the pleasure of meeting lots of the L&F staff over the course of the week, and everyone was always cheerful, welcoming, and happy to be at such a rewarding job. Lastly, all of this volunteer involvement is largely in part due to the efforts of Hilary Nelson, the Manager of Volunteer Services, who led my internship. Hilary's passion for serving others was always inspiring: she truly cares about each volunteer at L&F, and she was a wonderful mentor. Overall, this internship has demonstrated that Loaves & Fishes is more than a food pantry or a nonprofit- it is a family dedicated to helping uplift all who walk through its doors.