

Dear Members of the Harvard Club of Seattle,

Going into this summer, I was looking for a way to get involved in the Harvard community immediately. The Harvard Club of Seattle gave me this chance when they supported me with the summer community service internship.

I worked with Imagine Housing, a nonprofit organization that develops subsidised housing complexes on the Eastside. We ran summer camps at several different properties. In the mornings, we began the day with an ice-breaking game in an effort to help the kids interact with each other in a large group, then transitioned to an arts and crafts project that we had prepared in the morning before camp started. During this activity, we juggled encouraging the kids in their projects, giving help to the younger kids who struggled with certain parts of the crafts, and preparing lunch; it was an exercise in monitoring many different activities at once. After finishing the crafts and serving lunch, we took the kids to a park nearby (each property sits within a fifteen minute walk of a public park). Camp ended shortly after we returned from the park. Once all the kids got picked up, we spent some time discussing problems that occurred during the day, what we could do to fix them, and how to make the day run smoother.

We ran these summer camps in an effort to support the parents of the children on the properties, as well as to give the kids the valuable experience of summer camp that they might not get to have otherwise due to financial issues. On the properties, some of the families relied on the oldest child, some as young as thirteen, to stand as a primary caregiver during the day while the parents work. We tried to help the kids develop in a more comfortable environment through these camps; and this effort continues year-round through after-school programs, community events such as dinners for the all the families on the property, and classes to help the adults on the properties serve as more effective role models for the children.

On top of running summer camps, I got to see other sides of the Imagine Housing organization. Once a week, the residence manager at each property goes to the Eastside Baby Corner, an organization that supports families with free, donated products such as children's clothing and toys, and picks up all the orders from the families on the property. Helping deliver the orders to the families gave me a sense of the strong community fostered by Imagine Housing. I also helped with office management duties such as writing blog posts for the Imagine Housing website, submitting order forms to the Eastside Baby Corner, and tracking the hours of the kids and volunteers at the property.

Through all the summer camps and interactions with the families of the communities, I learned a lot about what it means to create a strong community. It is easy to take the comfort of a strong community for granted; I didn't realize the work that goes into creating a cohesive and successful place to live and grow. From supporting families with necessary services like the Eastside Baby Corner to spending time with the young kids and helping them learn to cooperate with their neighbors, my experience this summer was a rewarding one. I will always remember the children I met, and I am positive I will visit the after-school programming every time I come home on break to see them. I want to thank all of the people at the Harvard Club of Seattle

for supporting me in this opportunity; you made my summer a much more memorable and meaningful experience that taught me much about the value of a strong community and how I can contribute to creating one.

Sincerely,

Daniel Smith