

This summer, I have been volunteering at the CARE Center in many areas. I have assisted at Summer Reading Camp at New Hope Elementary, worked in the thrift store, and completed secretarial duties in the offices. My major at college is preparing me to work in Family Services, so this has been a perfect opportunity for me to gain experience in my field of study. I have been learning a lot about how this organization grows and operates, what it does to benefit the people of New Hope, and how to encourage self-sufficiency in a community.

The goal of creating self-sufficiency through education, job training, and other measures is certainly a challenging one, but it is definitely the best approach. Instead of providing charity that can help a person or family survive from day to day, this strategy works to break cycles of poverty for good. By helping children by providing school supplies, coordinating educational camps, pairing students with tutors, and many other things, they are giving these children the tools they need to stay in school and graduate. Multiple scholarship opportunities help graduates get to college and stay there. After completing school, candidates can look for employment opportunities at a job fair hosted by the CARE Center. Even those who did not complete school benefit from educational programs: G.E.D. classes are offered every week. Watching all of these pieces work together has taught me that dedication, intentionality, and consistent support are necessary to truly transform lives and make a lasting impact.

I am impressed with the balance that the operators of the CARE Center have struck between compassion and business. To do what they do, and do it well, requires that those involved must have a tremendous heart for God and the people in the New Hope community. They must be overflowing with grace and compassion, and have a sense of urgency about this community. While these are wonderful qualities, it would be nearly impossible to operate any businesses solely on compassion. There are bills to pay, audits to pass, and limited resources to distribute. Without strategic business planning and management, the CARE Center would not be a success. What they do so beautifully is give all that they can and make their neighbors feel loved and supported, while still being wise stewards of their resources. One of my goals when I came here was to learn how to balance compassion and wise management, and I am excited to be gaining a better understanding of their process.

There have been many small moments that have made me realize how special this place is. The mother of a student who was awarded one of the CARE Center's scholarships came in to turn in some of the paperwork, and her joy and thankfulness were overwhelming. When a young mother came in to use the computers, Executive Director Angela Hawke took care of her baby so that she could focus on her work. Volunteers and donor are constantly coming in, and joyfully, excited to be a part of the mission. These types of things would not happen in a place that was not as filled with love and dedication.

I know that during my time at the CARE Center, I will only be seeing the tip of the iceberg. Even though I get experience in many areas, this organization is responsible for so many programs that it would be impossible to be involved with each and every one! However, I can see the effects of many of these programs every day. I see employment opportunities at the Thrift Store and hear about talented individuals thriving at Pickers on Main. I watch as adults come week after week to GED classes, or to use our computers to find jobs. I know that the children in

New Hope Schools are being given important tools to succeed, and that graduation rates have been climbing. There are many, many more wonderful things that the CARE Center is achieving, and I am so excited to be a part of it.

Rachel Clark,
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