

Being a recipient of a Wellman Hill Grant allowed me to spend my summer interning with Cleveland Catholic Charities Migrant and Refugee Services (MRS) – an experience that was not only enjoyable but has also influenced my plans for the future. MRS is a resettlement agency that helps refugees start their lives in the United States by providing services as diverse as helping people get to doctor’s appointments to assisting them in finding jobs. During my time at Catholic Charities, I got to experience almost every aspect of resettlement work and gained an appreciation for how every part helps ensure a stable transition for the clients.

An MRS volunteer perfectly captured the working environment of the agency as “a culture of interruption.” In the office, it is rare that anyone goes a day without someone, a client or a fellow employee, dropping in unannounced to ask for help, and the expectation is that assistance will be given, with no questions asked. While this can lead to some late nights for the MRS staff (who need to catch up on paperwork or case notes that they would have done during the day), no one complains because solving problems and making sure that clients have everything they need matters more than one person’s schedule.

I witnessed this culture of interruption on my first day at MRS. It was towards the end of the day, and another intern and I were sitting in the main reception area talking about the culture orientation we had just attended when Emily, who helps refugees get jobs, suddenly started gathering a bunch of people into the space. Mmah, a single mother from Guinea, had just gotten a job, but she did not have time to drop her daughter off at daycare when it opened and then take the bus to work. Everyone sat in a circle and threw out suggestions for how we could fix this situation such as finding Mmah a new apartment or finding another mother who could babysit until the daycare opened. It was a situation that needed to be solved by a team, even though it

was not scheduled, and Emily fixed a problem that could have led to serious complications. The staff at MRS truly embodies the spirit of public service.

Because of my experience with Catholic Charities Migrant and Refugee Services, I know that I want to focus my future career on public service. The work was often frustrating and disappointing in some ways, but working with people to improve their lives and getting to know how much they have to give back to their community brightened my day. I am incredibly grateful to Judge Hill for creating this program that allowed me to explore my interest in public service and form a clearer vision of my future.