

Washington DC Young Adult Volunteers

Ben Evans: Miriam's Kitchen and Western PC

For Ben Evans, being a YAV was something akin to a family responsibility. The son of two pastors, one of whom helped found the Young Adult Volunteer Program, he once thought that he might be able to get away from what seemed like an inevitable path, but following some



advocacy work in college, he felt like the opportunity to be in Washington DC, one of the world's seats of power, was too good to pass up. Ben came to DC thinking he would have opportunities to influence some of the world's most powerful people, but found himself walking with some of the "least of these". The experience was different than he had expected, but it has transformed him in powerful ways, helping those who have become disenfranchised advocate for themselves. The experience has inspired Ben to continue with advocacy

work, and hopefully stay in the Washington DC area.

Miriam's Kitchen was founded in 1983 to meet the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness in downtown Washington, DC. Three organizations – Western Presbyterian Church, Unity Church and the George Washington University Hillel – banded together to serve their neighbors. The program, housed in the basement of Western Presbyterian Church, started by serving breakfast. Over the years the program expanded to include case management, dinner and a therapeutic art program. And Miriam's Kitchen has expanded greatly from the original three organizations, and now is supported by hundreds of corporations, and thousands of individuals. Their mission may have started as seeking to serve the homeless in their community, but the mission now is to end homelessness.



Ben helps with breakfast and dinner twice a week, along with helping sort mail for guests (Miriam's allows regular guest to use their PO Box as a mailing address, an important



thing when someone is homeless). Maybe most importantly Ben build relationships with those that frequent Miriam's Kitchen. When I visited it became obvious that he knew many of the guests well, and was able to offer some of the help they needed. Ben pointed out that this work has given him a chance to get to know the issue of homelessness up close, and that it will benefit his future career in advocacy immensely.

Along with helping out at Miriam's Kitchen, Ben also assists with the Youth Programs at Western Presbyterian, a task he enjoys thanks to all his years of participating in and staffing summer camps.

To learn more about the Miriam's Kitchen, check out their webpage: www.miriamskitchen.org