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Chicago Education Advocacy Cooperative – January to June 2025

1. Working with migrant and refugee families showed me how hard it is to get basic help for school. Some parents barely spoke English or any English at all, and they didn't know how to get their kids registered, and many were fearful of asking for help. I worked with one woman who had already been turned down, and when we helped her, she was so appreciative. That made me understand how much people need to be heard and taken the time. I used to think that everyone had an equal chance in school, but now I understand that is not true. That lesson taught me that trust and support are the key to making schooling more equal.
2. When I helped to gather clothing and raise money, I understood how much people rely on each other in times of need. The family we helped did not have warm clothing, and it was a big deal to give them winter coats. It was good to do something concrete, even if it was small. I learned that mutual support is not just about giving but being there for people when they need you. It also caused me to notice how many individuals the system fails or ignores. This experience taught me how much one must act within your own community.
3. The employment search research project was fascinating to me because I know people who've had similar struggles. There are so many low-income families who don't have the resources or time to look for work or plan out careers. When I was helping with the surveys, I realized that there was a person's story behind each one. It made me want to make their voices heard. I realized that information can help people if we collect it in an ethical and honest way. This changed my view about research—it is not strictly figures, it is human beings.
4. Working for ChiEAC showed me that with few resources, community organizations can be very powerful. We helped families with school, raised money, and spread the word—all while building trust. I couldn't believe how much we were able to do, but I also got to witness how huge some of the problems are. Issues like access to employment and technology gaps can't be fixed overnight. I realized that community groups are capable of doing a tremendous amount, yet

they also need to be supported by broader systems. However, this reaffirmed my belief in the power of community work even more.

5. Being in ChiEAC helped me understand what makes me excited and what I am passionate about. I had the opportunity to learn how to speak with families, organize resources, and manipulate data in useful ways. But above all, I learned how to listen and help people feel heard. I can now see myself having a future where I will be able to continue impacting other people's lives—maybe by doing community or school work. I want to use what I've learned to make things better for people who don't always get the support they need. This experience helped me feel more confident about my goals.