

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I'm Sara Ferraro and I am a rising sophomore at Notre Dame majoring in Liberal Studies and Psychology. I want to thank you for not only supporting me in my Summer Service Learning Program, but also for welcoming me to Rochester.

This summer, I have the opportunity to live with incredibly resilient women and learn from their experiences with homelessness, addiction, and incarceration. You might be thinking, what could a Notre Dame student with a home (Lyons Hall, the best dorm on campus), no drug history, and no legal history possibly offer these women? I had the same question at first; however, soon after my arrival I realized we have much more in common than our pasts. We share the same human needs for support, love, and kindness. In just a few weeks I have grown in understanding of the poor and their suffering, respect for people of all walks of life, and gratitude for life and family.

Bethany House has allowed me to provide judgment-free and hesitation-free assistance and support for women in the community. During the day, we are open to the public and operate a full food pantry, diaper bank, and formula bank. I help to serve community lunches during the week, and I work with Heritage Christian Services Volunteers to keep the house clean and running smoothly. On Fridays, we offer financial assistance to help people stay in their homes by assisting in paying their rent.

On top of all this, Bethany House is a home. All the guests and staff eat dinner together five nights a week, and we share weekly prayer services on Wednesdays. Everyone considers each other a sort of alternate family. It's not so different from my life at Notre Dame, where my friends and I meet for dinner every night at South Dining Hall at 5:30, we have dorm masses on Tuesday nights, and we are part of the Notre Dame community and family.

The Summer Service Learning Program has allowed me to immerse myself in a community outside the Notre Dame bubble, while remaining strongly linked to the school's values – and alumni. With a helping hand and a positive outlook, I spend my days empowering and being empowered by strong women. I cannot thank you enough for supporting me in this endeavor. Go Irish!