

# Half Way Through Eden House

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It seems like my time at Eden House has flown by, I can't believe I've been here over a month! As I was preparing to write this post, I looked back on the goals I set for myself at the beginning. I realized I was often caught up in the day-to-day business of working at a small non-profit and wasn't actively recognizing what I was doing to further those goals. But I've discovered that my experiences have made me grow in the ways I had initially set for myself. Two of my main goals focused on the management side of nonprofits- how Eden House uses its network to strengthen the organization and how everyone on staff are used to reach its full potential. Through my work here I've realized these two are very much related.

In the business world, you use your profits to build better products and services. For nonprofits, you have to rely on donations and the community to build up your organization. I saw this in action the most in helping plan our big Fall fundraiser. I was in charge of researching potential venues and two big questions were whether the space allowed outside catering (so we could use donated food) and if they had a nonprofit rate. I was pleasantly surprised by how many places did give charities a break but I was also blown away by how quickly costs add up.

I presented my findings at a staff meeting and our Executive Director started brainstorming our community connections so we could get the most cost effective price. We talked about how to approach the owners of venues and if it would be better if certain community partners asked on our behalf because it carried greater weight. We also discussed the logistics of the fundraiser, and how having people sponsor a table was effective because it adds a personal touch. I had never thought of how much planning and calculation it takes to make a nonprofit event successful, and now I feel so much more informed.

The skill of effectively utilizing your resources is just as important with the nonprofit team. Eden House has 11 interns this summer and at first I didn't understand why tasks weren't assigned on an as-needed base; our boss had certain areas to focus on for each of us and we would get projects based on those. I started to understand though that our focus areas were really tailored to our skill sets. One intern was really great at organizing and had an eye for style and completely revamped our clothes donation closet plus all our kitchenware. I expressed an interest in research and I'm now in charge of monitoring articles on human trafficking, a task I find much more interesting than my fellow interns. By playing on all our strengths, Eden House becomes stronger.

There isn't a concrete way I measure my growth, but I have been able to notice my progress just in the way I approach problems. When I first started, my supervisor would give me tasks and I would panic if I didn't know every last detail of what I was supposed to do. Now I'm able to think through different options and even offer suggestions to my bosses on how we can go about something. An example of this is when we were drafting a letter to the governor of Louisiana trying to get him to support state funding for Eden House. While I was handling research I came across multiple congressmen and women who had supported anti-human trafficking bills and I suggested we reach out to them to see if they would send a letter as well. Our ED loved the idea and we're now in the process of reaching out to them.

My proudest achievement has been my work on Eden House's social media. After taking over the twitter count, I have quickly increased our followers and have gotten our first re-tweets and favorites. I have really been working on looking at opportunities to publish what we're doing while respecting the confidentiality of the house and the residents. It has presented some unique issues but I have challenged myself to tweet once a day and have been able to follow that for the most part. I also took it upon myself to build a linked-in account for my boss after I attended a social media workshop for EH. After formatting it with all her information I went through our community partners and her associates to build her network. Since it was created, we've had her connections contact her through linked-in and offer their valuable marketing services for free and donated big-ticket items from our wish list. I feel a strong sense of pride of better connecting our resources to our needs. In addition, what I've learned about social media will be a valuable asset when I apply for jobs as many entry-level positions are looking for social media proficiency.