The past two years, I have had the opportunity of serving the women and children of our community. Last year, I volunteered at A Better Way. This year, I am now an employee at this shelter. While working at the shelter, we provide a lot of services. Some of the services we provide are for victims of domestic violence, transitional advocacy for victims of sexual assault, a 24-hour crisis line, suicide hotline, bullying, teen dating violence, domestic violence prevention programs, and a check-in call service for elderly or disabled homebound persons. My favorite part about working at the shelter would have to be working with the children while their mothers are at group counseling. I have the opportunity to love on the children while feeding them meals and playing with them.

I work at another program provided through A Better Way called Acts of Kindness also known as AOK. It is an after school program at a school on the south side of Muncie that focuses on several children who are considered “at risk.” Many of them have behavioral issues, they are at high poverty, and the majority of the children’s grades started out very low in the beginning of the year. At this program, we feed the students and then we do an enrichment activity. After that, we do homework rooms. After homework rooms, we may have time to do fun games that sometimes involve building on skills needed for classroom subjects like math, reading, spelling, etc. After the program, I give several hugs to my kids telling them to have a good night and that I will see them tomorrow. My biggest hope is that all of my kids will be back the next day safe and sound, because I know that the majority of their home lives are rough.
The positive impact of both of these jobs is HUGE. The shelter has saved lives of thousands of women and children. It has given them a way out of dangerous situations that the women may have felt that they were stuck in. The shelter in a way is hope for many that a new life has begun for them and their children. The positive impact from AOK is that the children have consistency in their lives. Many of them do not have consistency or structure at home. Being there everyday for the kids and being reliable, stable adult figures to them is crucial for our students to have us as role models. They need stability in their lives in order to have positive, healthy relationships. These children are not “bad” kids. They are AMAZING, smart students who need someone to care. They need someone to believe in them. I think that the ultimate impact I have had on the children is my time, my passion for them, my patience, my faith in them, and my relationships that I have built with each and every single one of them.

I think that working at the shelter and AOK has impacted me in several ways, but there are a few that have opened my eyes the most. I honestly always thought that I knew what was going on in others lives, but I really didn’t. I thought I knew that other people had it rough and that there were people out in this world with very low economic status. The truth is, those people are right in front of our own eyes. They aren’t just in different countries; they are in our very own community. I never would have realized this if it weren’t for both of these jobs. I also learned how much these children need someone like me who love them with all my heart, who cares about them. I would do anything for all of the kids that I work with, both at the
shelter and at AOK. Going into college with my major as elementary education, I
would have never realized how important relationships are. Being a teacher is not
just about teaching. The lessons taught by a teacher go beyond the subject matter.

My plans for the future were to teach English as a second language in a third
world country, but now I think that working at these jobs has changed my mind. I
could see myself doing missionary work for a few years in a different country, but
there is need in my very own country. I plan on teaching in an inner city elementary
school once I graduate. I would like to work at an afterschool program like AOK, and
if there isn’t one, I would like to start one. I think that it is important for the students
to not only get their homework done with guidance, but to also have consistent
adults in their lives with positive relationships. They need to know someone cares,
and that someone is willing to give them that extra time of the day to help with
homework. Working with the women and children that I am now has inspired me to
want to be the best teacher I can be. I want to change lives right now as A Better
Way Employee and AOK Employee and also as a future educator.