

This is what I wrote for our church's monthly email at the end of my internship.

Hi! I'm Jacob McCarty, and this summer I was blessed with the amazing opportunity to be an intern at West Heights. When I first heard that I got the internship I assumed I would be going on coffee runs and copying papers. I could not have been more wrong. Every day was a new experience that allowed me to have a better understanding of myself and what I can do. I was seen as an equal and that my ideas were just as valued as anyone else's.

On my first day, I had an enlightening experience. I met with Bev and two members of the congregation. Together we started off with a spoken prayer, followed by twenty minutes of a silent prayer. At first I thought I wouldn't know what to do with myself for 20 quiet minutes, but I was wrong. Afterwards, I realized that I had gotten a lot out of my chest. I knew then that I was ready to do the work I was put here to do. In my first week, I completed my Safe Gatherings certification and attended worship planning meetings. My second week, I started helping in the preschool. Working with the kids was so much fun. Each day they had something new to share with me about themselves. Sadly, I only got to work with the preschoolers for the first month, but I will cherish the time I got to spend with them.

A very special part of my internship involved weekly meetings with local community leaders. I met with non-profit workers, people in ministry, and other exceptional people. During these meetings, I learned what it means to be a good leader and how I can use my gifts to make a difference. Each one taught me different and better ways to help others. These meetings helped inspire me to continue my work. In one of these meetings, we were discussing the lack of Pride events in the Wichita area. Bev said that we should just throw our own event and the idea was born. On June 27th, we held our Pride Pop-up in Goddard. It was a huge success and there was both church and community involvement. We were so lucky to have Miss Kansas, Annika Wooton, do a speed painting for us that was later auctioned off to raise money for LGBTQ+ causes..

Through our youth ministry, I participated in the ICT Methodist youth mission week. Although the weather did not cooperate that week, we were still able to make an impact in our community. We helped at Chapel Hill UMC, Open Door Clothes Closet, and helped with various other West Heights missions. Our youth also spent a week working on skits and songs to perform for nursing home residents. We made a half hour service and performed it at Georgetown. Due to covid, we could not go on our annual Caravan, but we still got to experience sharing God's word. During my time, I was also able to work on the Break the Stigma youth led group. I have been learning how to become a facilitator and use my talents to lead a group while inspiring them.

I want to say a special thank you to Bev and Trudy for walking me through this journey and taking me under their wings. They have been amazing role models and offered me so much support and love this summer. I would also like to thank Linda Gott for allowing me to work in the preschool. In addition, thanks to all the office staff and volunteers for being supportive while I was here. Another big thank you to the congregation for allowing me to have this position and encouraging me throughout this experience. I can not say how much this has all meant to me. I will forever hold this in my heart as I start this new chapter of my life. God

gave me this chance, and I will use everything I have learned here to make a positive change in our world.