

Lauren Skar

Community Leader, *CSJ Justice Office Intern* with Marty Roers and Cheryl Peterson

As a student intern with the CSJ Justice Office, I worked with the co-directors of the office to support their justice work and bring in the St. Kate's community as well. This fall, a big focus was on the St. Paul municipal election that took place in November. The Justice Office organized a series called "Civic Wednesdays" with six Wednesday's leading up to the election. We hosted candidate forum sessions with every mayoral, school board, and school board special election present to talk with the residents at Carondelet Village. We also hosted a session on ranked choice voting and invited Ramsey County Elections to come to the village and speak with residents about how ranked choice voting works and the proper way to fill out your ballot using rank choice voting. The final was an event hosted by St. Kate's called a "Rent Control Debate" which we streamed over at the Village. This event focused on the pro's and con's of St. Paul's proposed rent control question to educate voters on rent control as a policy. In the post-election season we've focused on events around different aspects of civic engagement. In November, we kicked off our series of "Living Room Conversations", which are circle conversations with residents at Carondelet Village around advocacy.

As an intern, I bring in a new perspective on how to expand the community and build connections with St. Kate's students/faculty and the CSJs, especially after two years in the pandemic have disrupted involvement in both communities. In October, the CSJ community visited a theology class at St. Kate's to share more about our faith community. I had the opportunity to sit on the panel and I really enjoyed being able to connect with other St. Kate's students in their first and second year of school and share more about my experiences as a student and a member of the CSJ community.

I've grown in my understanding of faith and social justice work. The CSJ Justice Office is through the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, so the justice work done is connected to the faith community of the sisters, consociates, and partners in mission. Before coming to the CSJ Justice Office, I had the perception that justice is separate from faith. Since starting my internship, I've learned that isn't the case for every community and there's many different approaches to justice work.

My experience with the CSJ justice office has taught me the importance of community. Work cannot be done alone, you need people alongside you working toward a common goal, whatever that goal may be. Working in a job setting requires teamwork with people of all different backgrounds and experiences. I've learned how to recognize those unique differences and use them as strengths within a group.