

Spending a summer in their college town can be an amazing experience for students. Of the five institutions at which I have worked, four have been in communities of fewer than 8,000. Often, students have limited time during the academic year to explore and learn more about the community and its resources. Further, exploring the local region can be particularly challenging during the academic year.

I have often spoken with students who have stayed during a summer about their experiences. They consistently report a deepened appreciation for the community. They explore, meet people and generally have a rewarding experience. The slower pace, the absence of significant academic commitments and general freedom from multiple distractions provides them an opportunity to learn more about what it means to be a member of their local community.

Below, I highlight three Luther students who are spending their summer in Decorah. Each of their stories provides insight into how rich the experience can be.

Marlon is an intern in the Admissions Office. Aside from this important work supporting the college's enrollment goals Marlon has also been extending his time and service to a local community. Each week, Marlon and about seven other students from HOLA-Enlaces, a student organization, have been volunteering in Postville (25 minutes south of Decorah) once a week. They work with adults who have immigrated to the U.S. from Guatemala, Mexico and Somalia. The adults range in age from 19 to 45 and each week the students may work with five to 10 individuals. They are helping them to learn English and in the process developing meaningful friendships. They learn about hardships and successes the individuals have experienced and this provides students context and perspective on the challenges immigrants face. The students volunteer because they know the community needs their help and they love what they are doing.

Maggie is working on a student-faculty research grant from Luther to study women and Islamophobia in the West. She spends her days in the library or in one of the local coffee shops reading and writing (and enjoying chai lattes). The opportunity to conduct research with a faculty member is one of the more enriching experiences a student may have during the summer. Approximately 30 students are working with a faculty member on research that will contribute to a respective field of study, help the students enhance their research skills, and foster a deep and meaningful relationship with a faculty member. Maggie also reports that she has had the opportunity to explore Decorah on bike and foot, enjoy the Whippy Dip, and test her trivia skills at the weekly trivia night downtown. She reports, "summer in Decorah is certainly quiet, but the warm weather and relaxed people make it a great place to spend quality time with friends over the summer. That, and none of us are busy with homework." She is ready for NordicFest next week!

Kelly works in the Residence Life Office this summer and has supported the office staff with their work. Most recently, she has been assisting with housing assignments for incoming first-year students. This deep and thorough process typically yields high satisfaction with roommates. Please note, however, it is not a perfect science. Aside from this important task among many this summer, Kelly is engaged with the community arts scene. The New Minowa Players is a community-based theater organization that presents 5 productions a year. Recently, they presented *Suessical, the Musical*. Kelly furthered her acting resume, which includes productions at

Luther, with her performance in this production. The cast included Luther faculty and children of Luther employees. This was a wonderful opportunity to network with actors and crew and build connections with the local community.

All three of these students' experiences are unique. What they have the opportunity to do and explore is of their choosing. But they have embraced opportunities that are uniquely different from what may be possible during the academic year. I always encourage students to consider spending a summer in their college town, and whether it is research, working on campus, service or another endeavor, it can be a truly enriching experience.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corey Landstrom', with a stylized, elongated horizontal stroke at the end.

Corey Landstrom  
Vice President and Dean for Student Life