



## **Living Community**

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Each tenet has its important and necessary role within the Amate House program; but for me, community has been the most rewarding of the five. Until I moved into Amate House Little Village with seven other women, I had never lived with anyone intentionally in community. What does that even mean, you ask? To live intentionally regarding any of the tenets is to consciously make decisions based on what is right or fair for the common good of all people. In community, those people are your housemates. The commitment you've made to serve this year is a bond that holds you together with those other 7-12 people. In joining Amate House, you not only committed to working at your service site: serving clients, patients and/or students; but you committed to serving your housemates as well. Relax, its not as intense as it sounds, community is actually quite fun.

Building community with your house members can be easy, all you need to do is make the decision to be present and open to your housemates, and there are so many opportunities to do that. Community dinners Monday through Thursday are a sacred time to spend together; breaking bread, sharing stories and laughing over the fact that you made enough spaghetti to feed 20 people and there are only eight of you. Oops. Its okay leftovers are great for lunches. Also one-on-one dates with house members are a great way to get to know those people who relationship doesn't come as easily with. Seek out those housemates who you haven't had a chance to get to know and schedule a date to chat! And let's not forget you are going to be living in Chicago, where there is almost always something going on, and many times its free. Make plans with your housemates to get out of the house and go do something fun!

Living intentionally in community can be challenging and involves making choices that sometimes put your housemates ahead of what you want or what is easy. It's choosing to make plans with a house member to go to a museum on Saturday instead of leaving to go home for the weekend. It's leaving your bedroom door open as a welcome for people to stop in and visit, even if you're working on something or reading. It's going downstairs at night to hang out instead of spending hours on the phone in your room. It's choosing to intentionally check in on someone who was quiet at dinner. Your community will have a lot to offer you, but you have to take the initiative to seek it out, because it won't always come easily.

In most intentional communities the members come from all over, with all different kinds of experience, they spend their time differently, eat different kinds of food, clean differently (sometimes not at all...) and they communicate in very different ways. So, keeping all this in mind, living in community is accepting these differences respectfully, and making the choice to love that person despite those differences. At the beginning of the year you don't know the drastic changes these people are making to adjust to your community, because you don't know what they were like before they joined Amate House. If you have a concern it's your responsibility to bring it up with them and communicate how you're feeling. Usually there's a valid explanation for their behavior and you can gain understanding through that conversation.

So basically, the important thing to know about living in intentional community is that you must now make *your* decisions with these other 7-12 people in mind. Community is AMAZING and fun and challenging. But I guarantee that if you put forth the effort, these people will play a vital part in the shaping of the rest of your life. I was blessed to have the opportunity to live in two communities for a year each, and I now have 19 amazing friends who continue to support and love me in their own ways. As I mentioned earlier, there's a bond we share because we made the choice to live with and love each other intentionally, and that will stay with me forever.