Game night at Room in the Inn was an incredibly rewarding experience. Section C 1L volunteers arrived at exactly 4pm. We were greeted by Karen, a community organizer who introduced us to Rachel (our volunteer leader). Rachel brought us to the art room and talked to us generally about Room in the Inn and specifically about our activities this evening. One goal at RITI is to make each participant feel like a member of a community, even if just for a short period of time. Everyone was required to wear a nametag because names are important there. No matter where you go or what changes in your life your name is yours, and it stays the same. Game night serves a normalizing function at RITI. It allows participants to feel like everything is okay.

After I took this photo of Rachel, Tyrone (red sweater), and another gentleman, Tyrone opened up to Rachel about his family. As it turns out, I reminded Tyrone of his daughter. He shared stories about his children and grandchildren. Rachel thanked me during our debriefing session after game night. Tyrone is a person outside of being homeless. Rachel explained to us that people become homeless for a variety of unexpected reasons. Some have mental illnesses, others physical disabilities. Educational deficiencies, severe trauma, addiction, severe family dysfunction, lack of support systems, criminal histories, generational poverty, and cognitive disabilities are all reasons that a person can become homeless. Rachel appreciated the opportunity to get to know the person behind the homeless label.
While playing cards with Frank, I noticed that Frank had educational deficiencies. Frank and I left the Yahtzee table so that Frank could teach me how to play Spades. After sitting down and dealing out five cards to me and five to himself, Frank chuckled and said he did not remember how to play the game. So I smiled and asked him if he wanted to play Speed. He nodded, so I began to teach him. The game required Frank to have five cards in his hand at all times. This was difficult for Frank. He needed to touch each card and count it with his fingers to know how many cards were in his hand. So we finished the game and switched to another—and then another. Frank finally felt comfortable with UNO.

Theron also felt comfortable with UNO. In fact, he openly shamed other players by pulling out cards for them in advance because he just knew they were going to need them. Theron was hilarious. After defeating the group two times, Theron did a victory dance, and we all laughed.
We were able to meet interesting people and hang out with volunteer coordinators who had a different take on helping the homeless. Room in the Inn is an amazing organization with amazing programs, one of which is a law clinic. Rachel is finding out more information about the law clinic and will be emailing us soon. Hopefully we will be able to continue volunteering with RITI but in a different capacity. Cuyler, Mary, Austin, and I are all hoping to work under a lawyer and earn Pro Bono hours there in the near future. We will keep you posted!