

WORK TRIP 2005 THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS:

Work trip is something that will never truly be able to be expressed in any amount of words or pictures. The ultimate understanding of it is through experiencing it first hand. The impact that is made in a town so far away is something that will never be forgotten. Our project was to put a new roof on a large shed for an older couple. Their names were Lonnie and Ophelia Henderson. Lonnie had lost his leg from diabetes and Ophelia was suffering from some form of cancer. They both were welcoming of my crew into their home. I had never received such a warm welcoming by people on work trip in my life. On our last day of work I spoke with my crew as we were leaving and it seemed to us that we hadn't just put on a new roof but also given them a new sparkle of hope in their lives. We really helped them in more ways than can be expressed. All that can be said is that the smiles and hugs received from them were worth more than anything else in the world to my group and me.

On the side of our youth group, I found that being an older kid was just absolutely amazing. At times I found myself taking a step back and understanding really how much some of my friends in the group have grown, and the potential that some of the younger kids have. We discussed this on the trip, and this was the key to it all, it didn't matter about age or about who was with whom, everybody was able to make a connection with one another at some level. From the college kids to the incoming freshman, there were bonds that were formed like a mighty bridge, and no matter what happens through the years those bonds and friendships will hold lasting impressions and help mold everyone in their faith and understanding of themselves. The Youth Group Work Trip, is something that will stay in my heart for the rest of my life, and I cannot wait until next years trip where ever we may go, I know it we will only build to become closer. I love all of you guys and I will miss you during school, and I cannot wait until next year's trip.

-Carter R. Harrison

For me work trip was special in many ways. First and foremost was getting to see how vibrant and uplifting the senior high group is. As a former youth group leader, it was special to see how the work trip has been instrumental in helping to bring kids from at least eight different high schools together and early in the week have them all contributing and welcoming each other. This group truly exemplifies the churches mission statement, "We want to be a welcoming church where we can grow in Christ together." Second it was great for me to be there to see some people in action whom I have know for many years and been involved with other ministries. Mark and Zack Schroeder's presence's was special, Mark and I first went on a Wyoming trip five years ago and even though they are no longer in Chicago I seem to still run into them all the time! And finally seeing and relating to my sister-in-law, my two nieces and nephew from Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hinsdale was another of one of many God incidences or as we said a camp, "God sighting", I have worked with them on a cancer fund raiser for over 10 years. Thanks youth group for letting me be part of this experience, it was priceless!!! God Bless,

-Mike Karstens

I thought going in to the trip it was going to be worse than last year because the kids form last year were so close and we were adding double the amount of kids and that they lowered the age limit so there kids that were 12 there. After going to the camp I met young and older kids whom I still have a strong relationship with and I met many new kids from our youth group which I still talk to and hang out with. This trip made our youth group stronger and larger.

-Carter Krueger

It was a privilege and an honor for me to spend a week with 55 beautiful kids from chs. from the 19- hour bus ride, to camping out in our classrooms, meals and card games in the cafeteria, the joys and challenges of our work crews, the hot and hard work we gave to our work sites, the relationships we built with our residents', our competitive football games, the amazing music we led with a mass of lime green t-shirts (thank you Lizzie!), to our sharing and prayers. I was blessed beyond measure simply to be a part of it all. My only regret is that all of you in this parish did not have the opportunity to witness these kids working, sharing, supporting, singing, and loving together. It would make you so proud. We have some of the finest kids in this parish. They are a gift to all of us. I pray we will have another opportunity to experience their love and commitment to Jesus, to each other, and to this church. You will be moved.

-Frances Murchison

Shortly after returning to CHS on Sunday, I realized how much I've bonded with everyone in our youth group, whether it was rekindling a friendship from previous work trips or connecting with the new people whose parents undoubtedly forced them to come. Words can not describe the feelings that are running through your mind when you slowly see your group diminish, from 55 to 49, 49 to 45, and 45 to zero. After everyone has gone their separate ways, you want to regain that feeling of togetherness and that spiritual connection you had with each and every person. And it makes you want to come back for more!!!

-Ben Krueger

Serving those in need is a powerful way to express God's love. The worktrip offers teens an opportunity to love and serve the Lord by working on a home for individuals in need. The work is significant, yet the lasting effects of hundreds of young Christians coming together to rebuild a community are far greater. A week away from the normality and comfort of our homes benefits our inner self as we are exposed to a decimated and poverty-stricken area. We are challenged to ask questions, to reflect on our spirituality, to act on our goodwill, and to grow in our relationships with each other and God.

Working for residents who have been touched by God nurtures our spiritual being. Exposure to a new world expands our horizons. Devotions force self-reflection and force us to dig deeper. These elements work to instill a more palpable and permanent relationship with God -- one that continually encourages youth to provide hope to those lacking. Ultimately, the week brings together like-minded people and serves as a catalyst for each individual's spiritual growth.

Simply put, it is memorable, stimulating, and powerful.

-Matt Zafirovski

Work trip is an amazing experience. This year, my third camp, was probably the best yet. Having a large group made things so much more exciting and energetic. I can remember the first night, when I was meeting my crew that I told them I was from CHS and all four of them said, "Oh, that crazy church with the green shirts!" I then realized that we had made quite an impression on the entire camp. But having that sort of reputation made everything so enjoyable. Everywhere we went people wanted to meet us or join in on our huge card games in the cafeteria. Also, with this kind of excitement surrounding us the entire week, so much bonding within our group took place that I can't even count how many new friendships were created. Basically, work trip is unlike anything I have ever taken part in, and all teenagers at CHS should really join in the fun!

-Lindsay Fussell

As an incoming freshman I had my doubts about work trip. I wasn't sure how easily welcomed I would be into the group, especially because I didn't attend youth group that often last year. I got on the bus, and maybe in the middle of the night I went back and started up a conversation with some people in the back of the bus. All of a sudden I realized these people are nice, maybe it won't be that hard! The first night was unbelievably fun, and I knew that I wouldn't regret coming. Once we began working, I was having so much fun, getting to know my group and my resident. I could tell that he was so grateful for all we had done and it was great to be able to do something for him. Also getting to know my group was amazing! I know have friends in Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Michigan, and Ohio, and we are still keeping in touch!

The CHS youth group was so kind and welcomed me easily into the group. I have made some amazing friends coming to work trip with everyone! Even though there's an age difference I still felt like I belonged. Reading my care cards later, I realized how blessed I was to get to know all these nice people! It's such a great feeling when I think about the fact that I stepped on a bus with complete strangers, and when I stepped off it a week later, I was stepping off with some of the best friends I will ever meet. I have no regrets about coming on work trip, and I will for sure go again next year!

-Natalie Kleeman

This year for worktrip we doubled in size. At first this seemed like an amazing feat to all of the returning people going this year, and of course it was. Yet as it approached the time to leave, everyone started panicking a little about how a group this size could manage. But when I look back at it now we not only succeeded this trip, we definitely exceeded our goals and gained 20 something more people in our youth group. Every year these trips continue to amaze me and we couldn't do it without the support from CHS and all of the people who participated in it.

-Allie Hoffman

What a joy! What a journey! What a trip!! It was truly an honor to travel to Lexington, NC with our amazing group of youth from CHS and to have the privilege to observe these teenagers/young adults dedicate themselves to service, to faith and to God, and to each other. It was a pleasure to watch our youth participate in *every* aspect of the work camp...from being dedicated workers on their sites, to enjoying time together as a group (whether playing cards, football, or just hanging out), to their enthusiasm in song, praise and devotion in the evening programs. Our sharing together as a Youth Group was an extremely special time. We all took comfort in and from our group and learned and grew from this poignant, insightful, caring and heartfelt time. We have *so much to be proud of*...these kids bonded with joy and laughter, with hugs and open hearts, and with deep affection for one another. The presence of God is within all of these fine young people...I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in this journey with the exceptional youth (and chaperones) of CHS. Thank you.

-Robin Zafirovski

The best part of the work trip was definitely the opportunity to bond with so many new and diverse people. Meeting people from several different schools and even states was awesome. I loved that we could all come together from our separate backgrounds and really pursue a common goal. What we all took away from this trip is how meaningful other people are and just how good it feels to accept and be accepted at the same time.

-Alexander Krey

On the last day we had at our worksite, I wandered inside the house for a glass of water. As I stepped into the kitchen, my elderly resident, Jack, waved me into the family room. He asked me to sit down on the couch in his deep southern accent. He then turned on the stereo and sat down, and we sat together and listened to a girl sing a country song with the most beautiful voice. With a huge smile on his face, Jack told me that the girl singing was his daughter, and she sings for a well known band in their part of North Carolina. He told me he was so proud of her, and I couldn't help but smile too.

Later that day, after our goodbyes and pictures and everything, we were about to pull away in our van and Jack hobbled over to the window and gave me a cassette tape. It was his daughter's music, and he said "Sarah, thanks for coming this week." I want you to have this." If I saw God all week, it was right there.

-Sarah Masters

Overall, the greatest joy for me on this trip was to gain a greater appreciation for the fantastic group of young adults we have at CHS and around the country. They are all living examples of "servant leadership" in action.

-John Masters

I really enjoyed going on the work trip this year and it was my first year going I learned much more about people from our church, people from other churches and the residents that we helped. I've always liked work trips and I like our youth group, so I thought that it would be fun to add a new and fun experience. I learned a lot of new things, my daily work crew that were from other youth groups and were from other different states came together and helped fix up homes. I really enjoyed spending my work time with them because they were all so nice, got all of the work done and had so much fun doing it. We would invite our resident, Jerry outside for lunch with us! He would tell us all kinds stories about his life and family; it was very interesting to see how he got to where he is now. I really got to know much more of our youth group. I also meet other kids from other youth groups. That made my trip so much better because I left with new friends that I could keep in touch with and I still talk to some of them. Our group spent a lot of time together so I got to know many more people and I added on to friendships and made new friendships! Overall I'm really happy that I went on this trip because I learned so much that I would have never had a chance to otherwise.

-Jackie Ganfield

I've never been so attached to four strangers in my life. Through this worktrip I have learned to accept people's differences and build friendships with people who are complete opposites of me. In a way I used Christ's tolerance as an example and worked together with my crew to complete our physical and spiritual goals.

-Mika Devonshire

Getting to know the CHS youth group during this week I got to know all the people from our church in the Youth group really well. Before at the thing before the trip I would follow my brothers around and invade them. But after the trip I would talk to everyone not just the people they talked to. I really got to know kids I would have never meet and they became some of my good friends. This trip really helps me to reach out to meet new people. These people are a big part of my life now.

-Todd Zafirovski

The 2005 work trip was my third one so far and I would have to say that is was also the best. Going with so many people made it more fun and exciting. Since I am no longer living in Lake Forest I was really worried going into this trip because I was not sure whether I would fit in, but I was easily accepted back into the group. I made a goal at the beginning of the week to meet everyone from our youth group and 10 others kids from other churches and I easily met that goal by the middle of the week. The trip was not all about meeting new kids though; it was also about helping others who truly needed your help. All week I worked on an old ladies house and by the end of the week I could not have been more proud of my work group's accomplishments. I can't wait until next year!

-Zach Schroeder

It is hard to sum up the entire work trip in one paragraph. Not only is it a lot of fun, but it gives you the opportunity to meet people from across the country who, like you, are interested in helping out. During work trip, you also strengthen relationships within your youth group, and because I go to LFA, I was able to become friends with people I would not have otherwise met. This experience also gave me a different perspective on life. By observing the lives of others, I was able to truly realize how lucky I am. I always go home devastated that another year is already over. It is a truly terrific and satisfying way to spend a week of your summer.

-Katharine Patterson

I was apprehensive about going on work trip again just because I personally didn't enjoy the trip last year, but I went and I'm glad I did. I think being a senior during the trip really impacted how much I got out of it in general, but even so I made some lasting friendships and had a really good time. I was fortunate to have a wonderful resident who really appreciated our time and effort, and I think that had a lot to do with the satisfaction I got out of the trip. But for me, the bombardment was really what made the trip so amazing. It was really neat being able to see what an impact you have on someone and how all the little things can really mean a lot. But as conceded as this may sound it was nice to know how much I was going to be missed, because that helped me confirm that these friendships I had built were strong and meaningful ones. I had an amazing time, and I'm sure to be one of the freshmen coming back again for the next trip!

- Allison Cully

I had a great experience while on the work trip. Not only did I meet a lot of new and interesting people, but I had a fun time doing it. When I first met the lady whose house I was working on I was a little nervous because it didn't seem like she wanted us there, but as the week went on she really opened up with us and shared some interesting things about her life with us. I was also a little nervous about working with people that I didn't know at all, but they were all really nice. By the time the week was over I didn't want to leave because I was having such a good time. Overall, I had a very good experience on the work trip.

- D.J. Damrow

The Work trip was a life changing experience. Helping someone and getting to know them well was great. Meeting new people from different states and churches was very new for me. I enjoyed the whole experience working with my crew. Listening to the stories that my resident had, made me realize how fortunate I am to live in such a wonderful community. Getting to know my residents and having them participate in the afternoon prayers meant a lot to me and I hope it did to them also. It made me feel more comfortable to see how fast I was accepted into this group that I was not familiar with at all. I made a lot of friends that I had not even seen before I had gotten on the trip. This trip was one of the highlights of my summer and I will never forget it.

- Brad Douglass