

Mountain Mission Trip

The beautiful mountains of West Virginia where 18 of our SMPC youth and six adult chaperones just spent a week of service truly are, "Almost Heaven." Yes, we heard the famed John Denver song on more than one occasion. We felt and saw God everywhere we went – especially around the eerily quiet Upper Big Branch Coal Mine where townspeople are still grieving the loss of 29 of their own from the biggest coal mine disaster in U.S. history on April 5. We saw roadside tributes and felt chills at the sight of the "ambulance entrance only" sign where we were told the 29 who lost their lives exited the mine. Because of the stories we heard and the memorials we saw, our view of the coal mining industry has been forever changed – it's personal now. Our mission work supervisor, who lost three family members in the tragedy, gave each of us a piece of coal, which we will treasure. We stayed on the church property of Colcord Presbyterian Church in a 1925-built, three-story manse. Average worship attendance is about 50 and those faithful few know the meaning of Christian hospitality! They treated us to an extravagant potluck dinner serving some of the best garden grown dishes we'd ever had. My personal new favorite dish is "calico beans." The congregation shares a home-cooked meal, along with encouragement and gratitude, with every mission group that serves the community. Our youth divided into three teams, each with a very different mission project. For the next three weeks, one of our youth missionaries will share his or her experiences with you in the SMPC Weekly. I speak for all on the WV mission team when I say that our week of serving others through Christ was life changing. We are grateful to God for using us to serve our brothers and sisters in West Virginia and for the grace and generosity they showed us.

In Christ's Service,
Terry Gaines and SMPC chaperones

Power Tools and the Power of the Holy Spirit:

2010 Youth Mission Trip

You never know what to expect when going to a new place. I traveled with 17 other SMPC high school youth to Colcord, WV, for a week-long mission trip to help the surrounding members of the community. After a week of serving the people of Colcord, we had many amazing experiences. My group was responsible for replacing the floor of a family's bathroom because it was no longer sturdy due to water damage. Tom Alderdice, aka the "Tool King," was a great help to our group by supplying us with the knowledge and the power tools it took to do this job. With everyone working together and doing their share of work, we got the job done on time.

The homeowner, Billy, was eager to get to know us. Throughout the week, I had the opportunity to sit down with Billy for a while and hear all the stories he had to tell. I learned that he was a huge Denver Broncos fan and that he had quite a collection of Broncos merchandise that he had collected over the years. He was very proud of his collection and pulled out every item to share with me. On the last day of the trip, he pulled out his small coin collection and insisted that I take some of the coins (but I declined).

It was amazing and humbling to me that even though this man had very little, he wanted to share what he did have with me. Billy and I were strangers on Monday, but we bonded and became friends by Friday.

Our group was grateful to serve this family by helping to replace their damaged floor, and we enjoyed having the chance to get to know a little bit about their lives. It was an amazing experience.

-- Austin Lackey, age 16

On-the-Job Discipleship: 2010 Youth Mission Trip

This summer's mission trip took us to West Virginia. It was an adventure and a positive experience both in what we achieved on our work sites and how we grew spiritually. Not only did we form new relationships with the people we met along the way, but we greatly strengthened our bonds with our friends in our church youth group. I really enjoy going on these mission trips every summer and this year was no different. We learned new skills while working together and made memories that will never be forgotten.

My group worked on rebuilding a deck at Cold Creek Church. We cut wood, set posts, drilled and screwed the boards together. In the end we left the church with a covered deck, complete with railings and steps. We all felt great satisfaction in a job well done, but my most memorable experience was getting to know Logan, a neighborhood boy who came over to meet us and joined our group. He helped us build the deck, but also took us fishing, taught me how to gut a fish and then cooked my fish and brought it over to me for lunch. We also met Gwen, a member of Cold Creek Church where we were working. She came by most days to make sure everything was going ok, bring us popsicles, and share with us the history of her 113-year-old church. I am grateful that God gave me this opportunity to help out, but even more grateful that I was able to meet some new, very nice people.

-- Cecily Basquin, age 16

Home Repairs & Amazing Grace: 2010 Youth Mission Trip

On the high school mission trip to West Virginia, my group worked on the home of a sweet older woman named Patricia. Our work group included: Megan Ruckman, Kyle Alderdice, John Metzler, Kara Robertson, Natalie Gaines and me. (Chaperones were "the Jennifers" -- Basquin and Vaught.) We tarred Patricia's leaky roof and we fixed up her porch with a concrete patch and some new paint. She was very grateful for our work, but the thing that made her the happiest while we were there was the music that we played together. Patricia had a piano in her home which she played for us as we sang along to her favorite song, "Amazing Grace."

She also taught us a lot about the mining accident that happened there in April. Her daughter-in-law lent us a scrapbook she had made commemorating the 29 miners who were killed. We also learned first-hand about the accident, as well as the coal mining business, from Patricia's

grandson, Nicky. The trip was an amazing experience and we are all very thankful that we were able to go.

-- Tyler Kroeschell, age 17