

Group Reflection

This year at ASP our group (Teal Team 6) served a 64 year old women named Nora. Mrs Nora is one of 18 who has 3 boys of her own. She lived alone in her trailer but her twin sister and brother in law lived right next door. Our group was tasked with beginning to put a tin roof overlay on her trailer. Our group worked together very well through rain and heat so that we were able to put in a large portion of the roof. We put in new purlins and got about half of the roof covered with tin. Our efforts we towed making her home drier as before whenever it rained the roof would leak. One of the worst spots was above her bed so if it rained during the night, water would drip on her and her bed. Because it was not safe to be the the roof once it got really wet we also put in a support for her AC unit with has previously been propped up by a stick and we helped resized the stair on her back porch so that it was a more appropriate size and was safer. Mrs. Nora is a firecracker. She treated us as if we were her friends, periodically asking us if we needed anything or joking with us and giving us some sass. For example, we didn't put up any tin pieces in til Friday but everyday she would come out on her back porch that had been built the week before and she would come up and look at us working and ask us, "y'all got anything up yet?" Then when we finally got one in she said, "hey look you finally got one!" Everyone in our group had a varied level of construction experience. We learned how to use the power tools that were applicable to our job, we learned how to install and level purlins, and how to install tin. One of the main themes of our work experience was doing the job right even if it meant taking longer redoing some of our pervious work. Overall our team found this week of serving Mrs Nora and the Guyan Valley community to be very rewarding.



Nicole Bratton

Our homeowner, Gene, was hands down one of the kindest people that I've ever met and his kindness inspired me, and all of the other volunteers. Although he didn't have a lot of material possessions, he had something much more important, he had tons of love in his life. In a conversation with him, Gene revealed that he has lived all over the country but he wanted to be closer to his family so he settled right across the street from where he grew up. One afternoon, Gene pointed out to us the house next door that belonged to his brother, the house across the street that housed his other brother, the house down the road that was his sisters, and the one across that house that was his cousins, and how 6 more of his siblings were just the town over, and much more of his family lived in the area. Gene's daughter, son-in-law, and grandson lived in his house with him as well. Gene knew all of his neighbors by name and would often visit them during the afternoon while we worked. Every summer that I visit Guyan Valley, I am stunned by the sense of community that I've never seen living here in Montgomery County. Gene would bear the sweltering heat or the horrible rainfall just to come out and chat with us volunteers. His kindness, hospitality, and generosity were inspiring. Gene, along with the rest of the people that I met in Guyan Valley, showed us, complete strangers, a kind of love and kindness that I wish could extend to everybody in the world.



I was reminded through my trip with ASP this year that life isn't about how many cars you own or how big your house is, life is about loving your family, your friends, your neighbors, and everyone. I was also reminded that ASP doesn't have to be limited to one week of the year; we should take the lessons that

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we learn through our time in Appalachia and use them throughout the whole year; we shouldn't judge anyone without even knowing them, we shouldn't shy away from getting to know our neighbors, we shouldn't take those we love for granted; we should all live life like Gene.

Jocelyn Callister

"Teal Team Six" had the pleasure of working to re-tin the roof on the home of Ms. Nora Thomas. Nora has 2 dogs, no teeth and loves to share her morning coffee with us - "Maxwell House is the only kind, baby."

While the task ahead of us seemed simple enough - lay out the new tin over the old - the project became larger each day. The original roof was not completely square - or level - so we ended up doing, measuring and redoing almost all parts of the project at least twice.

Thankfully, we were extremely lucky to work with construction-guru, Sarah Shoemaker (Brent's daughter-in-law) on our team who taught us all what a purlin is, how to properly screw in a hex head screw with a gasket (make a pancake, not a crepe) and provided any tool imaginable from her Mary Poppins truck.

Incredibly, our whole team was completely on board for not just doing the job but doing the job well. Even after the third time needing to redo something, there was never a complaint from anyone on the team.

One downside to working on a roof is that it doesn't allow for much time in relationship with the homeowner as we are out of conversation range. Another downside is that you cannot work when there is a storm. Well, just as Diane warned me before we left, it WILL rain at ASP. On one of our 2 rainy days, the rain kept us off the roof but gave us time with Nora. She invited us into her home where we watched her roll cigarettes with her fancy machine, watched Law and Order (where Nora assured us everything would be ok because she has seen every episode) and played some home-made Mad Lib's.

Despite not achieving all of what I thought we had set out to achieve on the roof, we accomplished so much more.

Our guiding verse for the week reminded us that Isaiah said "here I am, send me." Each member of our team, Sarah, Keith, George, Anna and Estelle did this week what Keith uttered out loud on Thursday when asked to help his teammate: "I want to be there when I am needed."

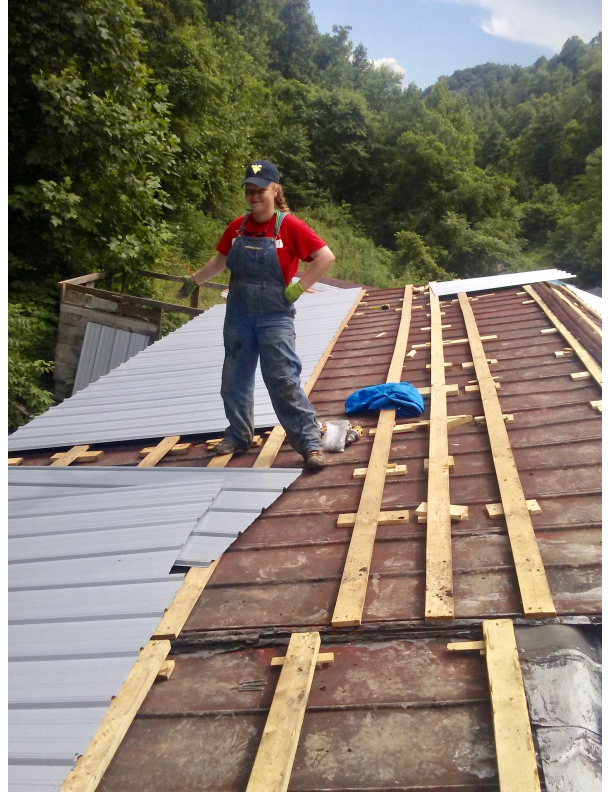
And by doing so, we helped make the best darn tin roof in Wyoming County, WV.



Estelle Casper

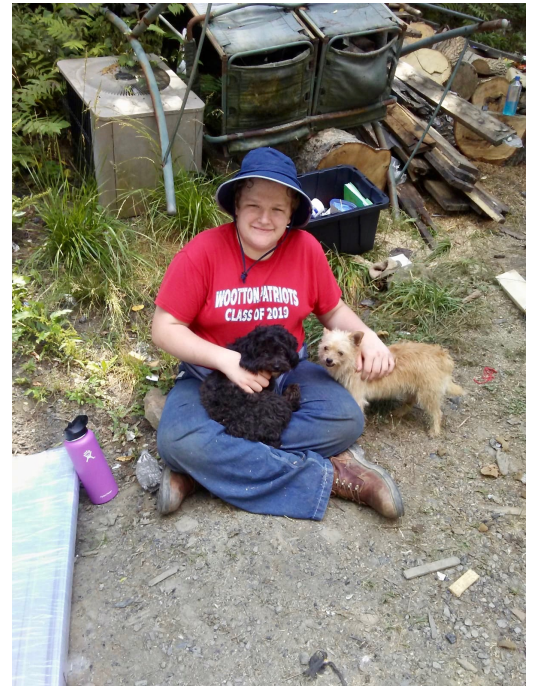
This week I worked on Mrs. Nora's home.

I love to learning how to install a tin roof overlay but my most memorable moment from this trip occurred as we made our way to Dairy Queen for one of our many trips to get ice cream. As we were driving we came around a bend in the road and saw that a car had pulled over and that a man was inspecting the tire. After he figured out that he wasn't going to be able to drive his car we offered to give him a ride to his house that was just a few miles from the Dairy Queen. When he got in he let us know that ASP had installed floors in his home 3 years ago. He then went onto say that he was so appreciative and that the people from ASP were the nicest people he had ever met. This was a memorable moment for me because it showed me how much of an impact the work I do while at ASP can have on a person. This was my last trip to ASP as a member of the youth group. ASP has always been one of the highlights of my summers. The people I've met and the stories I've heard will truly stick with me forever.



George Casper

There have many stories about what work has been done and the homeowners, but I had a different experience. I found myself meeting many new friends throughout the week, a phenomenon I haven't experienced in my prior two years going to ASP. At my work site I didn't like to go up onto the roof that much so I did whatever was needed on the ground whether it was cutting 1x4 for purlins, handing up drill batteries, or keeping the dogs company. However, while back at the center, I was able to meet many new people younger and older. I met Liz and learned about her dog who she had taken to the vet just the day before coming and had been working on a similar project as my group. I met Tim, Ken, and Clayton from Ohio who taught me how to play new card games. I met Emma and Andrew who I had never met, but with whom I share many mutual friends and would have probably never met otherwise. I met Ally, Jack, and Julia who invited me to sing along to old Taylor Swift songs while they played guitar. It was through these new connections and relationships, people who were also so passionate about service, that I saw God. Whereas most saw God in the work they were doing, for me it was through the work others were doing and the passion they showed which was inspiring and motivational to me.



Anna Cappellina

This year was my first time attending ASP along with my first time doing any serious type of construction. Going into the trip I was super excited to see what it was like in Appalachia and I was up for anything. As we drove through beautiful farmland in Virginia and then winded through curvy West Virginia mountain roads I was mystified. It was beautiful in the mountains, and one of my favorite moments was sitting on the porch at the ASP center in Wyoming County and looking at the mist wrap around the mountaintop. On Monday morning on our drive to the house we would be working on, I quietly took in the neighborhood we would be working in. It was lodged in between the mountains, and as we drove down the road I noticed many large, gorgeous gardens. The gardens were definitely the first thing that caught my eye. Even though many of the people in Wyoming County have income levels below the poverty line, disabilities, or homes that appear to be in great need of attention the gardens looked meticulously attended to. The grocery stores with good produce are about 45 minutes away so gardens are important if families want fresh produce. Our homeowner was named Nora and her brother in law, Rodger, and twin sister lived right next door to her. Nora was a feisty older lady with diabetes living alone with her two dogs, Spunk and Baby girl. On one of the first days we were there Rodger, her brother in law, gave us a tour of his beautiful garden. He grows corn, potatoes, cabbage, and tomatoes. He then proceeded to give us a quart of his homemade cabbage slaw. It was such a kind gesture, from someone who we had just met and it really touched my heart.



My work crew did roofing for Ms. Nora because her roof was very old and leaking in some parts. We removed nails, measured and cut wood, laid and leveled purlins, and put down tin. All of these skills were new to me and it is so rewarding to look back at the week and think that we were able to serve Ms. Nora and learn so many things about ourselves at the same time. One of the days in Appalachia it was raining cats and dogs, so we had to get off the roof. Even though it was frustrating to not be able to keep working it was great to be able to spend time with Ms. Nora. She invited our crew inside to sit with her. We made mad libs, Ms. Nora showed us pictures of her grandchildren, and even taught us a few new things. On Friday before we left she gave us all a hug and I could really tell how gracious she was for what we had done. Even though it may seem like a small thing to us it really improves her life, and if Ms. Nora can get a full night sleep without being awoken by rain coming in through her ceiling she can take one piece of stress out of her life. Southern West Virginians are a lot of times stereotyped to be hillbillies, but the people in Appalachia were the same as all of us. They may have very different backgrounds and lives from all of us but they are the same. It was a wonderful experience to have and I know that God is in those Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia with all the hardworking, loving residents.

Stewart Edwards

To be perfectly honest, I was not looking forward to a week of working in the high humidity and torrential rains of West Virginia this past week. Diane and I had just come back from visiting her mom in Florida and turned right back around after one day at home for a whirlwind weekend in Atlanta, Georgia to attend a graduation ceremony. Upon returning home again, we only had one week to be completely ready for our ASP trip.

Already feeling worn out from being spread too thin, I began the daunting task of locating all of the necessary items that were needed for the following week. It is amazing how many things get shuffled about over the course of a year which makes packing for the trip a very long and

drawn out process. By the time Friday rolled around it became apparent that we were in for a mad dash to meet the early Sunday morning deadline. As it turned out, we made it on time but with only a couple hours sleep the night before. During the interim of the week before leaving, I had made up my mind to never put myself in this position ever again. I had exhausted myself which only fed the frustration of knowing there would be no rest before traveling and facing the fact that the week ahead would be physically, emotionally and spiritually challenging. Like it or not, there really is no rest for the wicked or weary.

I had threatened to never be a part of ASP ever again by conjuring up every excuse I could muster to justify my reasons. The ideal of serving others in need as the highest calling had been kicked to the curb and self pity had reared its ugly head blurring my vision and sense of purpose. Reluctantly, on my part, we arrived at our destination, unpacked all of our belongings, moved into our bunk rooms and prepared ourselves for a site meeting with the homeowner to discuss plans for the work to be done on his home.

Unfortunately, or more like fortunately, the homeowner was not around at that time, but we were able to assess the situation and return the following morning to begin work. We pulled up

around 9:00 AM and began the task of unloading the van, setting up our equipment and assigning duties to begin in an orderly fashion. It was in the midst of designation that I caught a glimpse of whom I had presumed to be our homeowner, Gene Lester.

As I approached him to make my introduction, we extended a handshake to each other and it was immediately apparent that we had already formed a genuine bond between the two of us that would soon spread to the rest of us that had landed in his driveway that morning.

However, it would be later in the day when everyone else had left for a restroom break that Gene and I would share some personal information that just seemed to naturally come about. We shared about our family history which had been a cross to bear for the both of us. Gene told me about how he had formerly attended church on a regular basis but had stopped going because in his mind if he couldn't commit to it 100% it wasn't worth being on both sides of the fence. It was then that he mentioned the fact that his sister who lived across the street had



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been filled by the spirit and bore witness to him no matter what his intentions were for visiting her. He knew it was true because he could feel it in the air every time he was around her and she hadn't been to church in ages. I made the comment that it just goes to show you that the Holy Spirit can be upon you whether you're in church or not and that he and I were in church right then and there at that very moment. It was then that both Gene and I began to feel goosebumps all over and realized we had both just been in the presence of something greater than ourselves. We both acknowledged it was real and nothing further needed any explanation. This was the turning point of the entire trip for me. It was apparent that my motives for being there had reverted back to a time when I felt I had responded to the highest calling there is. In service to others who are in need is not only the right thing to do, but it is my duty to serve in whatever capacity possible for it will present itself at any given time and in more ways conceivable. The question, however, remains to be answered. Am I willing and able to respond to the call?

Amie Gribbins

One of the great joys I have experienced in recent years was the youth hiking trip two years ago. It was the memory of the hike that led me to say yes to an opportunity to join the youth at ASP this year.

A version and artistic interpretation of the following verse is displayed in the dining hall at the ASP Center that we called home this past week:
1 Corinthians 15:58
"58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Separation from a one year old child is difficult for any mother and I am no exception. The belief that this trip would strengthen my ties to our community and in some small way make the world better motivated me to face the time apart from my family. Upon

arrival I learned that we would be serving at a home that housed an 11 month old boy. This revelation was undoubtedly God showing up with exactly what I needed to know that I was where I needed to be. As the week went on we learned much about our family and gleefully held and played with baby Jaxon. I believe that God's plan for this fallen world are his beloved. Being his hands and feet this week was both humbling and fortifying. His spirit lead me to Guyan Valley and his beloved Baby Jaxon sustained me while I was there.

The youth that attended ASP are remarkable. To serve with them was truly a blessing. The work that this church community supports in Appalachia is undoubtedly making an impact in a community that is desperate for a hand up and I feel blessed to have been a part of it.



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Emily Grudzien-Eaton

I was very excited going into this trip, because i had a great experience last year. i wouldn't necessarily say i learned more, but i would say that i remembered more. i already knew that in Guyan Valley that there was a high poverty rate but hearing gene's background, my homeowner, the information seemed to stick with me more. he told me that he make \$770 a month and that it would take him 3-4 years to save up enough money to do what we've done for him in 1 week. gene's story really opened my eyes to how different life can be, while being so close to home, where most of us have the resources, opportunities and money to buy what we want and need. i saw god in gene because he has very little but he still keeps a very positive, grateful, attitude. moving forward in my life, i know i'll look at things differently. as i see my house, my new carpet, my own room, bed, etc i'll remember that not everybody has what i have and some don't even have half of what i do.



Keith Grudzien-Eaton



Going into this trip I was nervous at first, but as soon as I got working on the roof I was more comfortable. A few things I learned on this trip is to be more patient when working on a project like this. Also I learned how to assemble tin on a roof. One thing I learned about myself is I wasn't scared of circular saws.

Rhiannon Hill

This week I was in West Virginia in Wyoming county providing a service to people that live under the poverty line and live in horrible conditions. this man's house was infested with carpenter ants which left his house very unsupported, and we built a new underpinning for his house, I swear

Brent cut the wood 50 times before it actually fit. every day as we got more and more done we got more and more tired it was started to become really hard to do anything and then Thursday and Friday it rained horribly but half the group was still working and the other half was trying to not everything under the tarp soaked.

My ASP trip this year was a completely different experience because not only did I connect with my home owner I connected with another home owner at the picnic. her name was Kelly and she used to be a hairdresser and she went to cosmetology school and she was beyond grateful that by the



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end of the week she could finally walk around her house without falling through to the bottom. she started tearing up while she told me how grateful she was and of course I was right there next to her with the waterworks and then I cried 3 more times on the car ride back from the picnic. she was so grateful and kept saying if we had more people in the world like you all the world would be such a better place. I think all of you guys should try to do some kinds of mission trip or service that's way out of your comfort zone because it can and will put a lot of perspective on who you are and the opportunities you have.

Jack Karakashian

This was my first year going into ASP and because of this, I felt a little bit nervous because I had no idea what to expect. However, I was excited to try this new experience and I was ready to help influence their community. I learned that people in the Guyan Valley county have a very different lifestyle than we do. In GV, everyone is a part of the community. Jean, the homeowner of the mobile home we were working on, had grown up right across the street from where he lives now and he talked about how he knows about everyone on his street and how his family all lives in the area so they can walk to each other houses. This just comes to show how close of a community they are.

I learned I am more capable of achieving new and challenging experiences. Throughout the week, I continued to learn new things to help contribute to the worksite like learning how to use the circular saw to help cut the wood and rebar or how to install framing.

One place I saw God this week was when I was talking with the owner of the home we were repairing. Throughout the week, he made conversation with us and talked about life. His positivity and his kindness toward us helped me see God during the week.



This experience showed me that people have it very different than us and by doing these mission trips and helping to serve others, we are making a difference in people's lives.



Brandt Kaufmann

This summer, being my first ASP, I was both nervous, and excited. I wasn't totally sure how the trip was going to play out. I had seen the pictures, heard some stories, and just felt the general excitement from the youth that had been, but I knew that wouldn't be the same as actually going there, and experiencing it. And boy was I right, making connections with the people of West Virginia was quite the experience, not just the homeowner, but the people at other churches, the staff at the ASP Center, and surprisingly or not, the workers at the Dairy

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Queen we went to (pun fully intended) religiously. On this trip I learned many things, one of which being that Diane is legitimately the most prepared person for any situation that I have ever seen. I kid you not, if you said anything along the lines of "I need ____" whatever you needed was in your hand before you could finish your thought. Another thing that I learned is the amazing closeness of the people in West Virginia. This was a plain as can be when Keith had just received some tough news from home on a Dairy Queen run. When Keith heard the news, and was pretty torn up about it, we practically had a round-the-clock team of Dairy Queen and Saint Mark people there with him, helping him out and just being there with him. That, I think is my big takeaway from this trip, just the strong connections that can be made in less than 7 days, and how easy it is for someone to make a lasting impact in such a short amount of time.

Olivia Kaufmann

This past week which we spent in Wyoming County, West Virginia was an amazing and unforgettable which has helped shape me and develop my character just as every trip I have been on before. I was on the purple team which means that I was working with Diane, Stewart, Rhiannon, Maggie, and Jeremiah, as well as the Rainbow team who were also assigned to our worksite. Our crew worked on building and installing framing for underpinning, installing J-channel around the edges of windows and walls, and beginning to install foam board insulation along the front of a mobile home for a gentleman name Gene and his daughter, son-in-law, and grandson. We faced many problems throughout the week including the horrid weather, which was as hot as the sun 2 days and then raining like a monsoon for the next three, and measurements which seemed to change every time we blinked. Despite all of this we still had a good week and managed to accomplish a ton. A big "God" moment for me happened Friday afternoon, we finished our work for the week and had packed up our vans and after a very bittersweet goodbye to our home owner Gene, Rhiannon, Jeremiah, Stewart, Diane, and I headed over to visit with Donna our homeowner from last year. Donna is one of the most amazing and strongest women I have ever met, she is the matriarch of her family, all of which live in a row of 3 houses. We walked up and knocked on the sliding glass door off of Donna's porch, and as Donna came to the door, she looked very different, but she still looked great. As we sat on Donna's porch she was just chatting with us about her life and year. She told us about how she had lost 26 pounds, how great the roof we worked on was, and her new haircut, she talked to us about one of her family members who was continuing through school and hoping to get a PhD, and another one who had just joined the military. All the meanwhile the kids and dogs, with whom we had gotten acquainted last year, were running around and happily playing in the yard, and it was almost as if nothing had changed. This sight of us on the porch chatting and the kids playing just as happily as they had



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the year before helped to put things in perspective for me which was a serious “God” moment, when I realized that we swooping in for a week to help with a construction project but then we swoop back out and life goes on in this place. I think I had always been aware of this in the back of my mind, but this visit really just brought it to the forefront of my mind. I am so grateful that I had this adventure and was able to see the continuity of the community and it helped to ensure that I keep these people in my mind until I am back there next year.

Brent Shoemaker

The following quote is posted in the entry way at the ASP Guyan Valley Center:
“One person can change the world... and every person should try.” John F Kennedy

Walking into the ASP center when we arrived on Sunday, I thought to myself that I would be that one person... the one person changing someone’s life that was in need in Appalachia. I was there to serve and to focus on the needs of someone that I had never met, someone that was in need of love, support, compassion and understanding. And help to make their home warmer, safer and dryer. I was going to be the person that tried to change that one persons world. As was the mantra for the week at ASP... was I in for a surprise.

By mid day Monday, I realized that the “one person” that was going to change our homeowner’s world, Gene and his family, was actually a rag tag group of adults and youth volunteers that came to this Appalachian community with dramatic differences in abilities, construction capabilities, and general desire to actually work. Monday was a rough day and we all just kind of walked around in circles, except Stewart thankfully, with a hammer in our hands and really no clue of what we were doing or what even the first step should be. We were an aimless group, clearly there to try, but uncertain what we were actually there to accomplish. As we measured once and cut four, five or more times... just to be clear, that is exactly the opposite of what you should do when going about a building project!... we began to become a cohesive team, somehow with a plan and a focus and actually were making a change in the condition of Gene and his family’s home. And a positive difference, just to be clear. Again... what an ASP surprise ... as I took pictures at the end of the day Tuesday and Wednesday of the progress that was being made.

Around mid week, however, I experienced yet another change in my ASP thinking, again... an ASP surprise. As our relationship with Gene grew and strengthened and we began to understand one another more, it seemed that perhaps he was becoming the one person that was changing the world...my world and the world of all of these rag tag volunteers. He told us stories of growing up in Appalachia... as one of 12 kids, and how he knew everyone on the lane, and pointing to all of his friends and family members that were now his neighbors... some 57 years later. He shared that he had moved away from Guyan Valley for several years but



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chose to return to be with his family and community. To be honest, I was jealous of Gene and the fact that his community was his family. I miss my family in Indiana every single day as I chose to not live close to them. Gene was a good, solid man and we all enjoyed the time we spent with him and the conversation, full of stories, we had with him. There were several times when Gene came outside to talk and all work stopped... or perhaps that was when the real work began... perhaps Gene was changing our world... one story at a time.

The week came to an end. The rag tag loosely connected "team" of volunteers had truly become a cohesive, focused and smooth (-ish) functioning group focused on mission and changing the world, Gene's world. ... and actually were quite productive despite our initial efforts... yet another ASP surprise! I fully enjoyed getting to know each of the youth better and am so very proud of them and the work that they did. Also, the other adult leaders, or perhaps that should be advisors/ encouragers/ ring leaders/ and peanut butter spreaders, were just a joy to serve with and spend good, quality time with... especially in the pouring down rain! And we bonded with Gene and his entire community... including his almost one year old grandson, Jaxon, that lived with him. Our youth fully engaged Jaxon and loved him.

So... on the long trip home and back to reality I thought about the quote I had read upon arrival at ASP, my initial interpretation, and where my head was at this point in my service journey. I fully agree and have embraced the idea that "one person can change the world"... but also learned that some time you are the one both driving the change as well as being changed... and truly "everyone should try." We all benefited from our ASP experience... and for that I am grateful to my Saint Mark community for this opportunity.

Maggie Welsh

This is my second time on this trip. Throughout the school year, I am always looking forward to this trip. It is one of the highlights of my summer. I am always excited to find out what our project is that we work on throughout the week. We get to step out of our comfort zone by meeting new people and doing projects that we might have never done before. ASP is a lot of hard work, but there are still times for us to have fun and laugh like when we go to Dairy Queen or when we must clean the men's bathroom.

This year I was in Diane and Stewart's group with Olivia, Jeremiah, and Rhiannon. There also was another group from our church who was working on the project with us. With two groups, we got a lot more done then the staff expected which is great. Our project was to frame for underpinning and to insulate a trailer. Our fantastic homeowner was a guy named Eugene. He also had his daughter named Sam, son-in-law named Will, and his 11-month-old grandson named Jaxon that lived with him in the trailer. Eugene would come and hang outside with us while we were working. I saw God this week when me and some other people were talking to Eugene. He would talk about his life story which was so interesting to hear about. This guy could talk all day if you let him. He was so

grateful for us for working on his home. He kept on thanking us for the work we did. He told me that he is so happy that we were working on the home because he said that it would take him



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two to three years to do it himself. He also said that he does not care how many crews get sent to his home this summer because he is just so happy that it is getting done. The biggest thing that he said that stuck to me the most was if everyone did stuff like we did, then the world would be a much better place. I totally agree with that. From going on this trip, I learned that Christians are people that care about how other people live. We are people that want to make a difference in people's lives. I had a fantastic time this week and I will be counting down the days till next summer. Thank you to everyone who donated money to support us.

Jeremiah Whitney

This year at ASP was an amazing experience as always, where we gather to delve into the wild



and wonderful West Virginia, where anything can happen.. But each year I've worked many different projects and have met many different people, and I can say I'm truly grateful for each unique experience. The crew I worked with, called 'Welcome to Chili's' was composed of a dozen of our crew, which was a little more than expected. Our homeowner, Eugene or "Gene" was truly grateful for our insulation siding job we did on his trailer, which would've taken him nearly three years to save up for. Although he was a little quiet at first, he opened up without a problem during the week, in which he shared many of his life stories. Being a contractor himself, he had a rewarding appreciation for our effort. I find that my faith is deeply rooted through the service and relationships I make with people from various backgrounds, and ASP has shown me so many opportunities to help our fellow brothers and sisters who don't have as much. It was

wonderful to have seen the progress we completed this week, because I know we truly changed someone's life.

Diane Wirono

On Thursday evening, on our way to Dairy Queen for a treat, we pulled over to offer help to a man whose car had broken down. Under normal circumstances, I admit I probably would not have stopped to help this guy. He was pretty dirty from head to toe, and had the last of a cigarette clenched between his teeth as he worked on his tire. But we were in the middle of an ASP week, where empathy is high and judgments are low... a mindset I should try to



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adopt more often. As Stewart got out of the van and first approached, this man asked if we were from ASP. When Stewart said we were, he shared that ASP had installed new floors in his home three years prior, and that we were “some of the nicest people he’s ever met.” His car couldn’t be fixed on the spot, so we offered him a ride home. He got in the van, introduced himself as Roger Harris, and then proceeded to tell us his story. Which centers around recovery from drug addiction 7 1/2 years ago. He got clean, found a church home, and said his life has been improving ever since. He said he lets people know that he goes to church every week, and if anyone would like to join him, to just be outside on Sunday morning so that he can pick them up for worship. I’ve never heard anyone speak with such gratitude for their life. He saw himself as a recipient of God’s grace, and feels that it is his duty to pay it forward, helping a recently widowed neighbor friend around her house, and by spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to those who might need that message. We talked about the opioid crisis that’s going on in his town, and again about ASP. And I realized the positive mark that ASP leaves in this community, and how good it felt to be a part of that positive energy. We have been focused all week on a passage from the book of Isaiah, but this exchange on Thursday night reminds me of a familiar passage from the book of Matthew, chapter 25. In it, Jesus says to his disciples, “When I was hungry, you fed me, when I was thirsty, you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me. Today Jesus might say, “my car was broken down, and you stopped to help me.” Because when his disciples didn’t remember doing any of those things, Jesus told them that whenever we do for the least of his people, we do for him. So that was where I saw Jesus this week. In Roger Harris, recovering drug addict, from Pineville, West Virginia.