

WV MINISTRY OF ADVOCACY AND WORKCAMPS, INC.

SPRING 2016

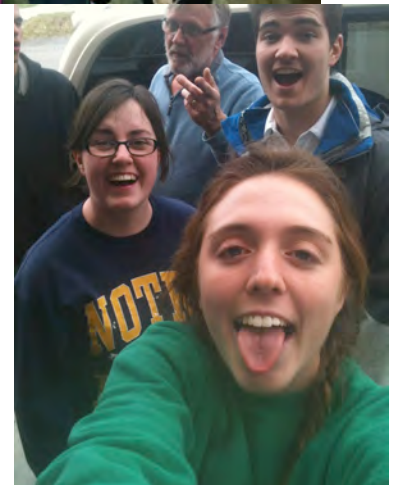


The West Virginia Ministry of Advocacy and Workcamps (WVMAW) is a Christian ministry supported in part by the Presbyterian Church (USA) that offers the opportunity for discipleship by partnering with those in need whose lives have been devastated by natural disasters or by the disaster of poverty in areas of West Virginia.

SPRING BREAK BRINGS STUDENT IMMERSION TEAMS INTO WEST VIRGINIA



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME



"When truly immersed in a loving, accepting, genuine community, material things become secondary very quickly" - Andrew Martinek '16



"Though culturally and spatially we are divided from so many, this trip has reaffirmed the possibility of shrinking the difference and rather embracing people's rawness and humanity" - Amy Melena '16



"In community like [Colcord] where material conditions are insufficient, interpersonal relationships are more cherished" - Yichu "Franky" Xu '18



Wooster's Immersion in West Virginia

Seventeen College of Wooster students, along with Dr. Chuck Kammer and Chaplain Linda Morgan-Clement traveled to Colcord, West Virginia, a site that the College has committed service to for over 40 years. While there, students built handicap ramps, painted houses, fixed a gutter, stained decks, and lent a hand at the local consignment store.

However, physical service was not all that was provided. **"Of all the work we did over the week, the most impactful was hearing the stories of the people of West Virginia in a time where their communities and livelihoods are being pushed further and further towards the back burner"** (George Marn '18). Along the same vein Max Goodman '19 remarked, **"I was given the opportunity to focus on people before progress and teach, learn, and connect with my peers and the folks we were trying to serve."**

Students engaged in rich conversations with the residents, hearing their stories about working in coal mines, the constant stressors of poverty, and the complexity that exists around the possible elimination of coal in their community. In these conversations, students found a unique mix of both grief and gratitude embedded in people's lives. When coal started to decline and mines were shut down, many were trapped in poverty, unable to even move out of the area.

And yet, in the same breath, people spoke of the incredibly supportive and highly connected community that surrounded them throughout these hardships. Cullen Dolson '16 notes, **"Colcord has experiences the harsh reality of boom-and-bust, extractive, coal economy...and yet positivity prevails...they have experienced pain, but they also exhibit unconditional love, perhaps as a result of that pain."**

Students were impressed with the interconnectedness of Colcord's community members and realized how important it was to take a step back from the busy lives that consumed them at school, and to appreciate small everyday moments and relationships. Having no cell phone service for the whole week, students engaged in rich and meaningful conversations and reflections with both community members and fellow College students.

Submitted by Gillian Kathryn Spangler, College of Wooster Class of 16



Holy Ghost Prep School

For twenty three years the students from Holy Ghost Prep School, Radnor, PA near Philadelphia, have been coming to WV during Holy Week break. The folks at Hampden love the enthusiasm and work ethic of these boys who bring energy with them in all they do. This year some of the boys worked on clearing some of the trees from the nearby hillside, and the wood they cleared was given to four different families for firewood. (Really handy in the early spring snow that has fallen on WV!) They helped to build walls and insulate in the mission center as the church is expanding the space for volunteers. Some of those with strong backs helped to dig a power line ditch for a family of two—a job that the Project Manager was going to do himself but was truly grateful for the help! We are blessed to have three “power days” of the prep school boys every year, and thank God for their commitment to mission in West Virginia!

Penn State goes back to Grade School

Leyna, leader of the Penn State group, agreed to take the team to visit Glade Elementary School. They talked to the fifth and sixth grade students about life goals and career prospects. They also played on the hoverboard! No one was hurt...It was a learning process for the children as they listened to the stories of the students. AND in turn the PSU students learned a little about the honor of following family tradition in the coal mines. One child even has sites set on being a gynecologist! The students learned a little bit about country life too: one child explained the birthing process of a cow—and how you have to wear an arm glove to pull them out. I am not sure how helpful this information will be for them as they returned to PA, but it was good for them to spend time learning the culture of the country kids! Gotta love kids—and gotta love the students for spending time with them!



GREENBRIER COUNTY PROJECTS

Cabrini College

Eight Cabrini College students from Radnor, near Philadelphia, PA helped a working mom and her working son with home repairs. It was a hand up to the family and a joy for them to have a house full of students learning some new skills and making a difference!

Notre Dame

Ten Notre Dame students came to WV as part of the immersion piece of their class on Appalachia. They were able to give a hand up to a family who is working hard to get their home safe enough to bring their infant son home from foster care with his grandmother to live with them. They replaced the bathroom floor, and put up sheet rock in the living room. Both of the parents work, and the mom is also going to school. They were so grateful for the extra hands that helped them become one step closer to being a whole family again. In fact, one afternoon the students found that the glorious smell of the freshly baked cake was for them—a gift of thanks for the work they were doing. It was truly a highlight!!

The Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg, VA spent a spring week in Hampden, near Gilbert

They got to work with Randal, who loved to talk. But the greatest impact this team had on him was not the wheel chair ramps that made his home safe for him to get in and out, it was the time they spent listening and talking and just being with him.

They also worked for a young family that works hard, and they struggle to make ends meet. In fact, if you like the biscuits at the local fast food chain, it is because the mom of this family goes into work at 3am to get them in the oven. James, the dad, helps get the two grade school age children ready for school before he heads off to work at the sanitation department. There is not much money for home repairs—like replacing the rotted kitchen floor. This team helped to get them a safe kitchen and safe steps for going in and out.

They got to know the family, and listened as James told them about his father who had a “cross over” experience three years ago. He said that he had wanted to stay in heaven, but that God sent him back to help James and his children prepare for him to go. James held his hand as his father went Home, confident that he was at last going to be with the Lord. James told the workers that he wanted to raise his children in the church. It was good for him to be able to share with them what this glimpse of heaven has meant to his family.



Making a Difference in Webster Springs

Folks from New Monmouth Presbyterian Church, Lexington, VA worked on renovating the bathroom while Mrs. Green was in the hospital. She arrived home just hours after the shower had been completed. The family has expressed much gratitude for the hard work of the volunteers that made all the difference in the world for making the home safe for the Green's. Above are the Green's standing on the porch built by PSU students.



WWW.WVMAW.ORG

PO BOX 18200, S Charleston, WV 25303

Contact Joan Stewart

Joanandtim.stewart@gmail.com

304-846-2294

WV MINISTRY OF
**ADVOCACY &
WORKCAMPS, Inc.**

Spring and Summer Locations: Greenbrier County, Webster Springs, Hampden, Colcord, St. Albans, Point Pleasant, and Clarksburg. There are currently 54 groups scheduled for 2016 and even a few for 2017! Pray for the families who will be served. Pray for the teams who bring love and hope in the work they do and relationships they build. Pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to work in and among our communities bringing us surprises!