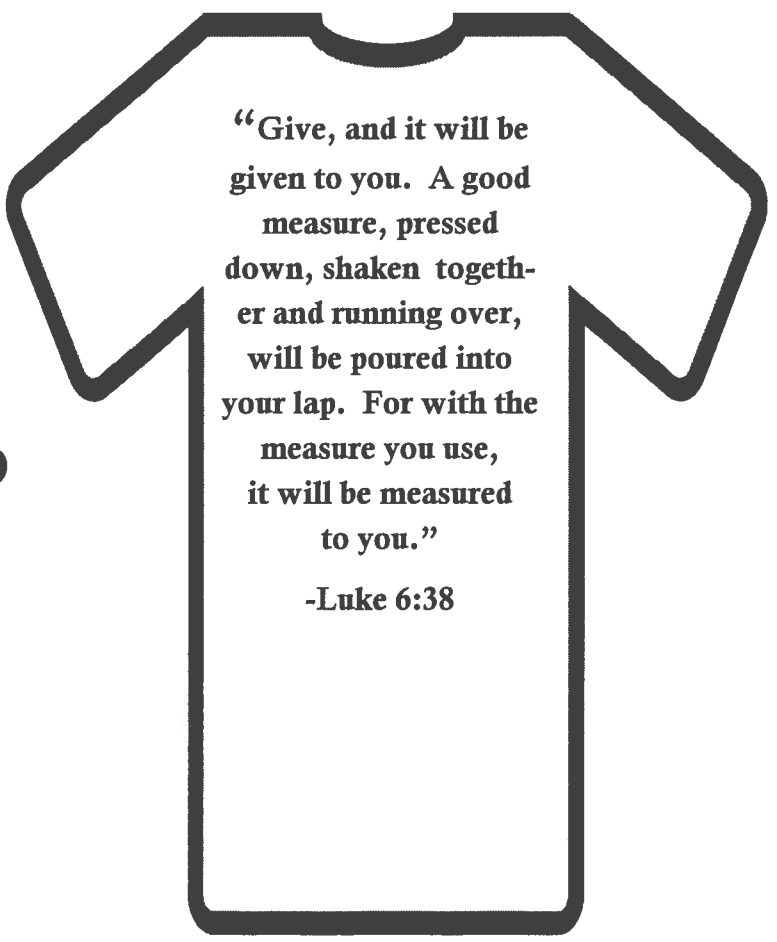




2017

**MISSION TRIP
REFLECTIONS**



“Meet me in St Louis” Mission Trip Reflection

St Louis has a rich history from being a fur trading post to Lewis and Clark, from the Arch to the Cardinal's baseball team. It also has a history of having the first university west of the Mississippi and the first high school built just for African Americans west of the Mississippi.

Recently, not unlike other major cities in the U.S., St Louis has had its share of hardships. The violence in Ferguson, a St Louis police officer was ambushed and shot weeks after Ferguson and recently it was rated one of the worst cities to raise your kids in.

These are now signs that people associate with St Louis but much like Chicago, there is more to a city than its violence. Not to say that violence should not be condemned, it should, but you must look through that to see what are people doing to make it better.

On this past mission trip, we met some folks that are trying to make a difference in St Louis. Fr Vince from Our Lady of the Holy Cross is living this mission. He is working with local pastors of all faiths, business leaders and residents to bring back a neighborhood called Baden.

Baden has many businesses that are closed, unemployment and homelessness rates are high yet he sets up a table to pass out food, water and prayers to people in need on a street corner. Fr Vince also cleans up the garbage along the street and talks about how it was piled 4ft high when he started 1 year ago. His goal is to take back the streets block by block and spread the Good News of the Lord to all who will listen.

Will you Meet Fr Vince in St Louis?

Our group went to a community church in Ferguson one evening to listen to a few residents talk about what really happened that started the violence. Mrs. Davis was one of the church Elders who spoke at length about the police, residents, visitors and others involved in Ferguson and the actions on those nights after the police shooting. It was very enlightening to hear from a resident who lived a block away from the main area of violence.

We also met Shirley who was the first African American Foreman at a McDonnell-Douglas (now Boeing) Plant.

She talked about her working her way up to the job and how she earned the position. Shirley also described how the plant employees would still call her names, make racial comments and spit on her. She was not deterred and stayed on the job and retired from Boeing years later. Listening to her you not only felt sorry for what she went thru but proud of her for her work and perseverance. I left the meeting think that all our young ladies on the trip should be inspired by her words as I was.

Will you meet Mrs. Davis and Shirley in St Louis?

I am sure many of the teens may have written about the Greenwood Cemetery. It is the oldest African American cemetery in St Louis. A volunteer caretaker, Raphael and his wife are retired

and have family members buried there. The owner has neglected the cemetery and Raphael, family and friends have tried their best to clean up the cemetery from garbage along with grass and weeds that are 6ft tall and taking over the property. Raphael cannot do it on his own. Our teens did a great job helping for a week but it may take him months to get ahead with on his own. Raphael needs all help he can get.

Will you meet Raphael in St Louis?

Many of the teens and adult leaders expressed outrage that a cemetery owner would neglect the graves of loved ones and that their final resting place would be turned into grassy dump. Several adult leaders, teens and their families have decided to make a return trip to help Raphael for a few more days. This Labor Day weekend we will make this trip and any support from our parishioners is greatly appreciated. Garden tools like weedwhackers, lawnmowers, water, gloves can help us work in the cemetery. We would need the tools for the weekend and will be returned upon our return. More details to come as they get firmed up.

Will you help us in St Louis?

Mr. Tom O'Donnell

2017 Mission Trip Reflection by Aggie Droszcz

On this year's mission trip, I worked at a food pantry. I had many great experiences, and met amazing kind hearted people throughout the week. The first couple days, I had the opportunity to see how the pantry was run and to be a part of it. My group and I cleaned out coolers where food was stored, took part in a NA meeting, and helped with tasks that were just too hard for the older volunteers to do. The thing that touched me the most was how easily the homeless could change moods and facial expression when given their everyday necessities. My job was to give anyone with a white card a bag of groceries. They all walked in looking sad, but after you gave them the things that they maybe couldn't afford themselves, their smiles lit up the whole room. This indeed made me happy and proud, because I realized what I was changing their lives for good. I was hesitant about attending a NA meeting, but all the members were inspirational. You really get to see the closeness and support between all the members. It was definitely an eye opening experience.

My Reflection for the 2017 St. Louis Mission Trip by Mary Kate Reilly

This is my first mission trip. I am going into freshman year and many people have said to me, "I wish I started as early as you did". I think people say this so much because of the amount of fun everyone has on this trip.

My group's job was to go to Our lady of Holy Cross and clean it up and do whatever they needed us to do. On the first day I helped with the kids and went on a nature walk for the first half. When I was with the kids they were so nice to me and were not afraid to ask me questions. Two girls even asked if they can braid my hair. It really opened my eyes because on the nature walk they would see all the garbage and wouldn't react because they were so used to all the garbage. Some kids would kick a gin bottle all the way to the park like I would do with a rock. It made me sad. After we cleaned the whole walk we made to the park with my group. That made me feel so much better because they shouldn't be used to seeing all this garbage.

My worksite had many different things for us to do. I did a different thing everyday almost. We played with kids, cleaned the church, landscaped the church, threw away dumped landscaping garbage in a lot, moved wooden planks from their chapel, and helping the homeless on a street corner by giving out food, care packages and more. My worksite was challenging, but the people I was with made it seem like we were just having fun. They were so nice and welcoming I only knew one person in my small group at first, but I now feel I am friends with everyone in my small group. I actually feel like I am friends with everyone that was on the mission trip. Not one person excluded me. They all made it feel like I've been friends with them for a while. After everyone got back from their worksites we would all play a game that they had on the middle floor. I thought that was really nice of them and it made time fly. All the people in charge of the mission trip who made the activities and wrote the songs were all really nice and welcoming as well. The activities they had were enjoying and I learned from them.

Andrew Barlas
7/8/17
Mission Trip

Mission Trip Reflection – Andrew Barlas

This 2017 Mission trip to St. Louis was an extraordinary and amazing experience because I made new friends, became closer to God, and by making a difference. The whole week I had few friends going into the trip, but as the trip progressed everyone was kind and made it easy to bond with them. By working and being around everyone just made all the churches have a bond that will never be broken. So having friends during the trip made it really enjoyable and be more productive. This trip has brought me closer to God because we prayed at least 2 times a day and had mass twice in the week. It also brought me closer by showing me how important God is during the trip, and we also spread the word of God which made my relationship with God greater. During the trip I showed my hard work and determination because I needed to do whatever I could do to help these people out. At the cemetery even though it was raining I kept working because this man needed help so I finished up his work. All the work I did made a difference in many people's lives and even mine because it made me closer to God. Overall this trip was an amazing experience and I would definitely do it again.

Mission Reflection by Pat Dunne

My mission trip experience was one I will always remember. I experienced growing my faith along with having a good share of fun. I felt that the work I personally did at the Greenwood cemetery was something that truly made an impact. The Greenwood cemetery was overgrown with weeds and many family members could not find their loved ones that were buried there. My group and I worked all week alongside of Raphael to clear as much of the overgrown cemetery as we could. By the end of the week we were able to clear a significant portion of the cemetery. Along with the gratitude of seeing the progress we made in the clearing efforts, there were two different people that came to the cemetery and were able to find their loved ones that they were previously unable to find. Along with seeing people finding their loved ones final resting place there were multiple people on the area that praised us when they heard of the work we had been doing at the cemetery. I feel that the work that I was able to do truly did make a difference and did help me strengthen my bond with God. I had an incredible experience on Mission trip and it is something I would love to be apart if again in the future.



The participants



Our Lady of Perpetual Help - my group had her as our Patron Saint (the food pantry was named after Her)

**NEVER WORRY ABOUT
NUMBERS. HELP ONE
PERSON AT A TIME, AND
ALWAYS START WITH THE
PERSON NEAREST YOU.
~MOTHER TERESA**

Words of wisdom that I used to guide me during the week.

I want to extend my gratitude to all those that made the week of service possible. Our mission trip to St. Louis was my first experience, serving those in need, with our church. I gained a renewal of faith, hope and love that were in need of a rekindling in my life.

FAITH. The journey was never spelt out for me and as a detailed oriented teacher, I had to rely on those with experience that the trip was going to be a success. I put my faith in Tom,

Tim, Shelly and Kristen to guide my week of leadership for our teens. All four were huge supports in not only logistical areas, but more importantly, in helping navigate the teens through some extremely powerful situations. Their faith in the mission and each other will never be forgotten. We all relied most heavily on our Catholic faith. The week's challenges led us to deep reflection and prayer. Calling on God, Jesus and Mary (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) daily, to worship both morning and evening, gave me strength that will endure. One example of my faith journey during our trip was an encounter at the Food Pantry with a family of eight. They drove up as we were cleaning out the parking lot. The pantry was not open, I had to turn them away. The dejection on the small children's faces will forever be ingrained in my brain. I had access to the food, why couldn't we just give them a bag full of groceries to help them through until the next day, when the pantry was open? As I wrestled with the situation, and spoke at length, with Pam (the extraordinary women running the pantry) I began to realize some situations are to be entrusted to God and that my faith cannot falter when circumstances are beyond my control.

HOPE. The week was filled with hope. "The kids are alright" is one of my favorite expressions. Many times social media, news outlets, and conversations about today's youth is discouraging. I'm here to testify, that is not the case. Our next generation has the ability to move mountains and they are doing it one stone at a time, both literally and figuratively. Our teens on this mission, cleared about three acres of a desecrated cemetery. They honored people by uncovering their final resting place and making it visible to those in need of a reminder that we are only as good as those we respect. "A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just." - Pope Francis. The teens fed the poor and homeless, they cleaned run down buildings and churches, they prayed daily. Hope was in their eyes, in their expressions and in their hearts.

LOVE. The sheer amount of love expressed by every person on this trip is extraordinary. From the organizers at St. Julie, family members supporting their teens from home, parishioners that prayed and "liked" the photo collages, the volunteers at each work site, the leaders from Young Neighbors in Action, to the collective group of teens from Nebraska, Wisconsin and Tinley Park, we were connecting to something bigger than ourselves. The love of the service opportunity, the love of the camaraderie, the love of singing and sharing stories was the driving force behind our outstanding journey. However, most importantly, the love of God was ever present. His love was my ultimate reward.

Mrs. Kathy Reilly

I get excited as the month of June approaches every year. This is for numerous reasons. It generally marks the beginning of summer, and means that Father's Day is approaching. The other reason is that the St. Julie Teen mission trip is approaching us. I look forward to it every year. This was my fourth trip. Each trip has been a wonderful experience and this year was no exception. The weather was outstanding. In years past, the weather was quite a bit warmer, but with the exception of one day that was hot and humid as well as some rain, this year was very comfortable. I also was blessed with a great group of teens in my small group. They were very hard workers. We had a very strenuous work site, and they did what needed to be done and responded very well to the needs of the person we were working with. Several of them were veterans with regard to mission trips and assisted the newer teens learning things.

Our group was working at Greenwood Cemetery. It opened to meet the needs of the growing black population of post-civil war St. Louis and St. Louis County. It was the first commercial non-sectarian cemetery for African Americans in the St. Louis metropolitan area. More than 50,000 African Americans are buried within Greenwood's 31.85 acres. Greenwood Cemetery was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 26, 2004. One of the last owners let the property go and it became over run with weeds and was in disrepair. A small group of people led by a man named Raphael paid the back taxes on it and has taken up the task of trying to clear it. We spent the week assisting him in clearing several large sections of the cemetery. It was very hard work, but also very rewarding. While we were there, a couple came by. They had come last week to see if they could locate their mother's grave. At the time, Raphael said that the area where she was buried was not accessible, but noted that we would be working in that area and they should come back. When they came back on this day, they were able to visit the grave, largely in part to the work of our group.

This week during program time we spent time talking and learning about the seven themes of Catholic social teachings. Several of those themes were reflected in the week that we spent here in St. Louis. The first of these themes was Call to family community and participation. This is the belief that people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. This was practiced by the fact that several groups from different parts of the country. In addition to us, there was a group from Wisconsin, and Nebraska. Although they both came from smaller communities than ours and had different interests, we all came together as a "Christian Family" with the common goal of being able to assist various groups in St. Louis and provide them the assistance needed.

Another theme is Life and Dignity of the Human Person. This belief states that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. This theme was addressed one evening in which we went to a church in the town of Jennings, which is adjacent to the town of Ferguson. The town made headlines almost three years ago when riots were held

to protest the shooting of a black youth by a Ferguson police officer. A leader in the Church, Ms. Davis, spoke about the riots, and how they affected the people of her community. She shared many personal stories about several residents of the town and how they lost everything when they had their businesses burned down. She spoke about how these people were innocent victims of violence perpetrated against them by people who were not even from the area. She talked about how they have persevered and are rebuilding.

Another theme was solidarity. Solidarity states that we are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers and sisters keepers, wherever they may be. We demonstrated this in my small group. Although in our group there were teens from different communities, different high schools and had different friends. They were able to identify similar interests and engage with each other. They all worked together and acted as one cohesive group to help Raphael and the community of St. Louis. In conclusion, this trip was by far my most enjoyable and rewarding to date.

The moments that I will remember always will be the ride to the work site every morning. This time was spent being acclimated to Trapp Music, laughing and getting to know the teens in my group. I will also remember the hard and rewarding work they did. Their work ethic is one that they should be very proud of and is second to none. Another moment had to do with Raphael, the man we worked with during the week. Each morning and afternoon we left we would share a cordial handshake and kind words, however the last afternoon when we were leaving, despite the fact it was raining cats and dogs, When I went to extend my hand instead of shaking my hand he hugged me and said "Bless you and your teens". At that moment, I knew just how much the work that the teens did had touched him.

My most memorable moment on any trip to date also came on the last day of the work site. Most of the other groups from our church were finishing their jobs early on Friday, but due to the nature of our work, we were not able to finish early. Rather than leave out and do something fun or relaxing both of the other groups can by our site to assist us in our work. The sight of all three groups working together and enjoying each other's company as they did so is what being a church family is all about. It was a fitting end to our week here in St. Louis, even as the rains came and ended our day.

St. Louis, Mo. Mission Trip

This being my final mission trip through St. Julie I've taken a lot away this year. I believe this is going to be my most memorable trip of the four I have gone on. For a few reasons this was my favorite mission yet! First every one involved was amazing starting with the leaders from YNIA Ryan was an outstanding character always having a good time! You could tell he loved what he was doing and for that I was grateful. Shannon the prayer director, made an incredible effort to make prayer as fun as possible while still being very respectful. He also looked to be enjoying himself with what he was doing which made it better for every one else. Carla the site director although I didn't see her that often but, when I did she seemed cheerful and did her best to help any sites!

Then we had every leader from St. Julie who put the utmost effort into helping each other and the teens who participated this year and years past. I'm so happy I've gotten to know Mr. Tim while working at the cemetery and gone on another trip with Shelly! But I can't forget my Uncle Mr. O who was one of the people who helped me get involved on these missions! They have really changed my views on the country and world ultimately. This was my first trip with Mrs. Riley and Kristin it was a lot of fun with them we had a few good laughs and let's not bring up the van incident which indirectly was caused by me.

We also got to meet few other groups that were there with us I didn't talk to many other leaders except for Mark who was quite the character but it was great working with him everyday at the cemetery! I also met Marleen she came to the cemetery on Wednesday and she was a work horse non stop but she was terrified of the few snakes we encountered!

I spent the week at the cemetery that so dearly needed our help! We worked hard all week to help as best we could we were able to clear a few acres of land. However that hardly scratched the surface of what needs to be done. I got to meet Raphael, he was incredible. He spent every day while we were there working hard and helping us kids with the equipment. I learned that his grandparents are buried there but they have been lost to the forest. Too far in to get to. His wife also has her grandparents buried there. We were able to uncover their gravestone which was greatly appreciated by Raphael and His wife! They have been working hard on this giant of a project for the past two years. He comes out almost 4 to 5 days a week to help others find their loved ones. He truly inspired me, he had such passion for something and it was no easy undertaking. I'm grateful to him and the others who are contributing to the cleaning of Greenwood cemetery!

This trip has been my favorite, for too many reasons! I met the most incredible people, I got help someone who was really in need, and most importantly I learned that it takes just my small acts may not seem hat big but to some they could not be more grateful! So you don't have to change the world to make a difference in someone's life. I'm sad this will be my last trip through St. Julie however I will not stop contributing to there in need!

Joel Machlet

Seth Huisenga

Mission Trip Reflection

Going into my second mission trip I thought I knew exactly what to expect, but I was completely wrong. This year I brought four of my own friends from school to show them how mission trip can change your life in ways you could never imagine. When we arrived at the church this year I was so excited to get on the road and create amazing memories with my friends old and new, but I never knew I would be so happy with everyone in St. Louis, and not just my parish. This year I made so many new friends that I know I will be staying in contact with for years to come, and it all developed from one silly game... nine square. Nine square is just like four square, but with nine squares. This game created so many laughs, memories, and nicknames for people. Just this one game gave me comfort all week and made me happy all the time. But even more rewarding was the actual mission work being done. I worked at Holy Cross Church, where the people who volunteered were well into their sixties and seventies. The physical labor and the tedious tasks could have never have been done so efficiently or more diligently if we did not come and help them. One lady's name was Lynda. Lynda always had a smile on her face, even though we all knew she was beyond stressed out about basically running the whole entire church. To see the work put in by Lynda was amazing and I know we made a difference in Holy Cross Church. One day my small group went into the poorest community in the United States and handed out food, lemonade, and toiletries to help them get through the day or even the week. We met a man who really touched our hearts with his optimism and his kind words. This year's mission trip has blown me away with how God can truly impact the world if people put their heart and soul into everything they do. God Bless!

Tom Mittler

St. Louis, Missouri was my fifth and final mission trip, and it was by far the most memorable of all the trips I have been on. This trip started off as 22 people who barely know each other and ended as 22 people who have an inseparable bond. We all made an amazing impact on the communities we worked in.

My group worked in a cemetery that was extremely overgrown and you could barely tell it was a cemetery- it looked more like a forest preserve. As we continued working through the week and noticed all the headstones we would find as we cleared the land it finally hit me why we were doing this. Although this cemetery is no longer active, the families who's loved ones are buried there still try and find them, but many are unable to. I thought of how I would feel if I went to the cemetery my grandparents are buried in and saw it in the condition Greenwood Cemetery was. That is what kept pushing me every day to continue working hard. The man who took over this project was extremely devoted and works many long hours in order to up keep the place, but he cannot do it alone and that is what makes the help we did so important. What meant the most to me is when other groups would finish at their sites early and come help us at the cemetery instead of going back and getting extra shower/nap time.

All in all, I value this trip because of the closeness of all of the teens and adults on the trip and I hope more people get to experience God's love as we continue to go out and do His work.

As my final mission trip came to a close, I realized how grateful I am to have the St. Julie TNT program in my life. These trips, events and people have influenced the person I am today. St. Louis was a great experience with Young Neighbors in Action. My work site, Greenwood Cemetery, changed the way I looked at cemeteries and also other cultures. Working and speaking with Rafael inspired me to do more for the people in my own community. Rafael also said, "I am fighting this battle continuously, way over powered, but I will continue fighting until I win because I am doing God's work." His words touched my heart that day at the cemetery. His determination, passion, and faith was reflected through his words and actions. One day I hope to see him again and continue helping him fight the battle against the growing cemetery. After one week, my perception of impossible tasks has changed to possible. Anything is possible with determination, passion, love, and God. Ending my highschool career with this great group of teens and memories is more than I can ever ask for. Thank you for all the memories guys!

Love, Claire Meskill

Mission Trip Reflection

During this mission trip I learned a lot and I also met new friends. For the most part I learned that in the roughest conditions you can still be happy even though the things around you are all screwed up. I also learned that helping people is so awesome. There was a man that I had met on one of my group activities, his name was Steve and he was part of an association called AA (Alcoholics Anonymous). He explained what his group did and how his group fixed alcohol addictions, it mainly just showed me that even though the area that he moved in he's still also trying to help others. Also the first day that we got to the area we set up a stand with supplies, food and medical stuff to give out to the homeless that needed it. Steve was over there too and decided to not take any and help us by giving out more supplies. This just shocked me because he decided to help us give out more stuff when he easily could have just have taken something and walked away. What I mainly learned about this mission trip for being my first time ever I just had learned that happiness is still in everything, even in the roughest conditions.

Cody Machlet

Mission Reflection by Meredith Flaherty

My name is Meredith Flaherty and the mission trip to St. Louis was the first mission trip I have ever been on. Knowing that this was going to be a new experience I have never

participated in, I had no idea what to expect, however I knew that inspiring people surrounded me. I quickly became very anxious and excited to go. When we got there I made sure I kept an open mind for all the new people from all over the country that I was about to meet. I met people from Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Florida. I quickly became close with some girls and boys from all different churches, and I found it awesome how easily I became friends with them. Also, I became very good friends with other teens from St. Julie as well. I am so thankful that I was able to go on this trip and meet so many amazing people.

My worksite was Our Lady of the Holy Cross Catholic Church, which just had its 150th anniversary of their church. On the first couple days we picked up trash, trimmed bushes and hedges, gave aid to the people in the town we were working in, and organized basements and file cabinets. Then on the last couple days we went into the town and found out that behind some abandoned buildings a landscaping business was illegally dumping all of their trash like tree branches, and stumps. So on the last days we spent most of the day throwing stumps, leaves and branches into a huge empty dumpster, however by the time we left, that empty dumpster was very full. Everyday, I came back to the church sweaty and full of dirt, thankfully the YMCA was right across the street. I also felt very comfortable during this mission trip. After our worksite I couldn't wait to play nine square and to catch up with all my new and existing friends.

My faith has deepened and I feel I am more connected with God and my community. I am so glad I took this opportunity and I am looking forward to the upcoming years of mission trips.

By Mike Letz

To be honest, going into my last year of mission trips, I wasn't expecting much. I figured I'd be doing the same thing since the past three years but I was wrong. My worksite group was assigned to help out at a food pantry for the week. When we got there our first day we just cleaned out two freezers. When I first saw them I thought that it looked fine. Instead it actually had black mold growing on the walls and most of the food in there was moldy. I learned that a simple look at something doesn't tell you the state at which it is in, you have to take a second to look closer and find the problem. The work was tiring but it felt great to get it done. During lunch we met the owners of the pantry, this woman named Pam and her husband. From there I started to see how much our help was needed. They were both fairly older and had trouble keeping maintenance over the pantry. The husband even had an injured foot so our help was truly needed. We had a conversation with Pam talking about the community, she said that she was thankful that her parents pushed her to try hard in life and that they told her that she will go to college and get a good job. Pam said she thanks God every day for being so blessed with a good support system and said that's mainly why this community is so run down. Pam said some of the people who need money don't have a support system to push them to get a job and work hard. This made me think of how grateful I should be for my parents for pushing me in school and work, if they didn't then I probably would've never gone on a mission trip. The next day the pantry was open to the community to pick out what they need. The people there were very nice and all seemed to know each other, it was actually sad to see such nice people live in such a rough area. Later in the week, my group was able to sit in during a narcotics anonymous meeting. I was expecting there to be crazy stories and crazy people with withdrawal symptoms, instead I just saw people. This part of the trip stood out to me the most because, it truly taught me not to judge. I know it's a common rule to teach to people but honestly, no one follows it.

We all like to make fun of an odd customer at work or get angry at the person who's holding up the line at the grocery store. I'll admit I judge too, I just assume anyone who does drugs is a low life who just threw their life away but after this meeting my point of view changed completely. They were all very friendly to us and each other and accepted that they made mistakes in life. It was one of the members fifteenth year anniversary of staying clean and all the members congratulated him and hugged him. This really touched my heart seeing all these people supporting their friends and made me realize that they are people who just made a mistake, how dare society judge them and turn their backs on them when they really just needed a good support system. This part of mission trip really changed me and made me realize that we're all children of God and we shouldn't argue or judge. I am also a lot more appreciative of my family and friends for supporting me in everything I do and I could not thank God enough for the life I was given.

Mission Trip Reflection 2017 St. Louis, Missouri by Shelly Lazowski

Howard Zinn once said, "Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world." I believe that this quote is the best way to describe how small acts of service completed by numerous individuals can positively influence the world. This year was my second year volunteering as an adult chaperone for St. Julie TNT Mission Trip to St. Louis, Missouri. I was actively involved in TNT youth group when I was in high school including attending numerous Breakaway retreats, mission trip to Cairo, and attending weekly meetings. I truly believe that being involved in TNT strengthened my faith, brought out my true personality, gained lifelong friendships, and made countless unforgettable memories and experiences. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to come and give back to TNT as an adult chaperone this year. When we first arrived in St. Louis the Young Neighbors in Action (YNIA) staff, which included Kara, Ryan, and Shannon, welcomed us to our new home for the next week. Once we completed our

adult meeting and afternoon program, my group was informed that we would be helping out in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Food Pantry that week. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Food Pantry is a volunteer-run facility that serves the surrounding community to help nourish those in need with respect and dignity. On Monday during our first day of work, Pam and Gwen who are two of the main volunteers at the pantry greeted us with open arms. Pam and Gwen then gave us a tour of the facility and background information on the surrounding neighborhood. Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, Our Lady of Perpetual Help sends several volunteers to visit 2 local grocery stores to collect any overstock that will be distributed to the food pantry clients. They were so thankful to have a group of hard working volunteers to help with their tasks for the week. Some of the jobs our group completed by the end of the week included cleaning, disinfecting, and organizing several walk-in refrigerators, sorted and passed out groceries and household items to families in need, and assisted in the unloading of groceries from the local stores. My small group was an amazing group of kids that were dedicated and determined to complete any given task that was asked of them. Not only did our group go above and beyond with all of the tasks that we have completed for the week, we built countless relationships with the people of the St. Louis community that will last a lifetime. I am very pleased with my decision to chaperone another St. Julie TNT mission trip this year to the St. Louis community. This trip has allowed me to strengthen my faith, gain new friendships, and remember to appreciate everything that God has given me. Sometimes it takes giving your service to those less fortunate to really know how fortunate an individual can be. I am very blessed and thankful to have a family, friends, and parents that have constantly pushed me to my greatest potential. I would not be in the place I am right now in my life without all of their support. Always remember to never miss an opportunity to help others; you may never know how it can change your life for the better.

Emily Macijunas

This summer I served on my fourth mission trip to St. Louis, Missouri. Every year I return from the trip with a full heart and a new perspective. One of the things I found that made St. Louis different from the other places I had served was that the standard of living drastically changed depending on what area you were in. When I think of St. Louis I think of the populated downtown area and the skyline featuring the Arch. However, I saw that similar to Chicago, there are parts of St. Louis that are deteriorating quickly. Our group was lucky to be staying in a nice and safe neighborhood that was about a half hour from the city and every morning while driving to our work site I observed how our surroundings drastically changed. Areas like East and North St. Louis are plagued by poverty and homelessness; it was clear we would be serving areas that needed and would appreciate our help.

While in St. Louis, I was blessed to be working at a local food pantry-- Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The biggest thing I took from the food pantry was that service is something that never ends. The pantry relies on volunteers, especially the couple who runs it; they are both retired and have donated their time and energy into helping feed the poor and homeless. Serving others is something I am very passionate about and it was nice to see an example of how no matter anyone's age or capability, there will always be someone and some way to help. While at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, I had the opportunity to sit down with Pam, the pantry's supervisor, and she explained her system to me which included various algorithms and spreadsheets which she uses to keep track of all the people who visit the pantry. She calculated that the pantry averages about 100 guests a day, and last year alone the pantry helped feed 13,000 families which was equivalent to approximately 30,000 people. Two of the five days we spent at the pantry were days people came to receive food. As someone who actively donates and partakes in food drives, it was an eye-opening experience to see what happens behind the scenes. I was most taken aback by the standards of the food served to the less fortunate. One of the jobs my group completed was cleaning out the coolers and freezers in the pantry. It was a job that was well overdue and when sorting through the produce over half was covered in mold, and some of the dairy products had expired over two months ago. It caused me to reflect on myself and my tendency to only donate things that I didn't necessarily want. The people who visited the pantry were most excited about the fresh produce that was available to them and they knew it went fast so they came early for it. When my group arrived, the pantry wasn't set to open for another half hour, but people were already lined up because they wanted to ensure they received their portions. One morning I was restocking the shelves when a man said something to me that I'll always keep with me; he said "I don't know why people complain, it's places like this that make me know our Lord is good." Being able to help people like him, who rely on the pantry for food, was a humbling experience and I'm so grateful that I had the opportunity to be there for a week.

Mission Reflection by Ms Kristyn Granahan

I was brought into the world three weeks ahead of schedule and ten days before Christmas. I share a birthday with Brad Pitt.

As a baby, my hair would stick straight in the air when I would wake up every morning. My mom entered me in a contest for the craziest baby hair, and I was disqualified because they claimed it wasn't natural. When I was three, I tripped up the stairs at my neighbor's band concert and cracked my head open. My only fear was when the doctor took out scissors to cut the stitches; I thought he was going to cut my head off. During that same year, I became so crabby at times that my parents switched my door handle around in my room so they could lock me in. I ate in solitary confinement at my own third birthday party. Growing up, I wanted to be an Auntie Anne's Pretzel employee simply because I liked their uniforms. I also had a desire to become a bus driver. A drawing of mine was once featured on Tracy Butler's Weather Watchers during the morning weekday news. Frequently as a child, I would swallow Shocktarts whole only to throw them back up, sometimes in the middle of a store. I have no sour taste buds. I once had a rainbow beta fish that I neglected to feed properly. Needless to say, he is in a better place now – adopted by my cousins. In elementary school, my friend kicked a hard plastic bowling pin and it hit me in the face. I had a black eye for Christmas that year.

On a vacation, I have gone inside the trunks of several trees in the Redwood Forest in California. I have also walked across the Golden Gate Bridge, twice. I have traveled above the clouds to visit Hearst Castle, also twice. I have soared through the air on a dolphin's nose and hiked to the top of Diamond Head Mountain in Hawaii. Last summer, I had the privilege to be a part of a pilgrimage to Madrid, Spain for World Youth Day. I was literally ten feet from the Pope, and I spent ten hours in that spot waiting for that moment. At the overnight Vigil, I was blessed to spend the night with two million of my closest friends in the midst of two thunderstorms.

Considering all the statements I just mentioned are true, it is safe to say I have had my share of remarkable and peculiar situations, even with just the few happenings I chose to share with you... This was the start of my witness for my senior Breakaway retreat five years ago. Since then I have had many more incredible opportunities in my career, travel, family and friends. I have lived an abundant life thus far, and been blessed in many ways. However, my most privileged moments aren't the well-traveled one's. They aren't the unique childhood moments I've had. My most privileged moments are those spent in solidarity with those "less fortunate" than me.

"Less fortunate" is a term typically used to describe those with less money, less access to food and sanitary items, or less "opportunity". But the people I met in St. Louis, those chronically homeless, were in some ways more fortunate than I am.

My small group worked at a church, Our Lady of the Holy Cross, where most of their parishioners are 70+. We helped them catch up on maintenance projects that needed some younger bones to complete. We mowed the lawns of older parishioners who are unable. We

picked up garbage bags full of trash down the street where the kids camp played around. One of the days, we took a break from the cleaning and organizing to join Father Vince in a homeless ministry. This was the afternoon that sticks out most in my mind.

We loaded up the car and followed Father Vince just two blocks away from the church. The street, he explained, used to be the busiest in town. A well-known street with all kinds of restaurants and things to do. What's left is a trash filled area that is "home" to many chronic homeless people. Father Vince visits this area every Tuesday, picking up trash and giving away food and drinks to those who need it. We set up the table with lemonade, granola bars, pastries, and small waters. They also offered angel cards and religious books, and on a good donation day the homeless could get a rosary.

Our group rotated holding signs to advertise our table, tending the table, and picking up trash in the surrounding area. While I was tending the table, I was blessed to meet a chronic homeless black man named Steve. He was well dressed for a homeless man – unwrinkled and clean khaki pants, a black t-shirt, with a Hawaiian print button up shirt over, black framed glasses, and decent-conditioned brown shoes. Steve started the conversation asking if I would believe him if he told me his brother was Mexican. I said that I would be inclined to believe him, since that's the way he confidently opened discussion. He went on to tell me how his mom is black and his dad was Mexican, and he came out full-blown black and his brother came out full-blown Mexican. He was in good spirits, despite his living situation.

Steve came up to the table and asked what we had to offer that day. He said he wanted something healthy and asked me what he should take, so I pointed to the fig newton bars. He asked why that was the healthiest choice, and I said fiber. Steve and I had a five-minute conversation on fiber and what makes foods healthy. When I rotated to pick up trash, Steve hung around talking to our small group. Once we were all back together, he started talking about the grace of God and spreading good. He told Mr. O to read an excerpt from his AA book – any excerpt. So Mr. O opened to a random page and read a paragraph that could not have more perfectly went with the message of what we were there to do that day.

I never expected a conversation with a homeless man to be so inspiring. Though homeless due to poor decisions earlier in life, Steve still had standards. He took pride in how he dressed and presented himself. He was conscious of what he put into his body. But the most incredible aspect was that even in his deep vulnerability, he still felt qualified and passionate about giving. Steve knew that people still needed him to show up for them, and he knew that good words still needed to be heard. Even in his "less fortunate" state, he still felt qualified to give to those who have more than him. It was a truly incredible and uplifting experience that solidified the belief in my heart that it is not a house or car or clothes that make a person. It is the core of the heart, the authentic positivity and open-mindedness, and the relentless chase for the greater good that makes a person. No matter your life situation or current state of being, you are still qualified to be the hands of God, and to spread his good word.

Darryl Farrow

St. Louis Mission Trip Reflection

This was my first year on mission trip and my experience was amazing. The two main factors that I liked about mission trip was that it helped me create new friendships with different people and that the trip was an eye-opening experience. During mission trip, I made new friends with people that were older than me and that were younger too. All these people impacted me because they always shared a good laugh with me and most importantly helped me when I needed them. This being my first year on mission trip meant that I frequently had questions. No matter how many questions I had they always were there to help and answer them. Although creating friendships was an essential part of having fun on this trip, the biggest factor of this trip that I liked was how it opened my eyes to know how privileged my life is and how much I take it for granted, also how little deeds can mean so much to people. When we first arrived to the First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood we were in an upper middle class suburban neighborhood so I thought that where we'll be working wouldn't be bad. On the first day of going to our worksite we drove into a town filled with poverty on every street corner. Many houses were boarded up and some were burnt and it didn't seem like a place any human should live. This showed me that life in Tinley Park is way better than where we were at and that I should appreciate it more. Many people in the area would do anything to live the life we live and every day we take it for granted. Another eye-opening experience during the trip was that the small things I do can really positively impact someone else. I worked at the food pantry during the week and the woman who runs it name is Pam. One day, she asked us to clean ceilings fans and to me it seemed pointless but I still did

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it anyway. After 30 minutes me and a group of kids finished cleaning and we told Pam. When we told her she seemed shocked and said that would of took her a week had she done it by herself. At that moment I came into the realization that the small things that we do can mean the most to someone else. When it was our last day on the worksite and we were saying goodbye to everyone at the food bank and Pam began to cry. She thanked us for all we did no matter if it was big or small because she said they really need help and it really hit me hard right then and there. It showed me that our work is always appreciated and it is something that I took home with me and I will continue to do God's work because of it.

Anna Schissler – Video Reflection on YouTube

St. Julie's 2017 Mission Trip

<https://youtu.be/95ruj0qYE8A>

Jack Meskill 7-17-17 Mission Reflection

This year's mission trip was truly eye opening. I've made so many new friends and had so many new experiences. I worked at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Food Pantry. Right off the bat the volunteers were welcoming and extremely friendly. On the first day we cleaned out some freezers. The second day was the community pickup day, where everyone comes in and gets their food. The sincere gratitude of people that I helped out was truly inspiring. Wednesday was preparing for the Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I won't lie- I initially was scared, but that meeting was the moment I remembered most out of this trip. The meeting's topic was relationships, and the leaders quickly realized the members of the NA meeting were giving us advice, not explaining their experiences. After the meeting there was a group prayer and everyone held hands and prayed. Thursday was another community pickup day. I met a grateful and uplifting lady that made me smile in an instant. She was sincerely grateful for my help of a very basic task. Our last day was Friday, where we tidied up the food pantry. The last day was emotional yet enjoyable. This week was truly unforgettable.

Jack Ruane

St. Louis has always been an extremely important place in my heart and mind. I have dozens of family members that call the city their home and I will be attending Saint Louis University in the fall, so, St. Louis is always one of those cities that I thought I knew by now. But, my experience with YNIA and the other fantastic members of TNT at St. Julie's taught me that there is much in the city that I was simply ignoring, areas that are filled with decay and poverty and need our's and God's help. I luckily was assigned to a worksite at Greenwood Cemetery, slightly north of downtown St. Louis, where the gravestones fill up around 32 acres and number roughly 50,000. The cemetery is historically African-American and the owner of the cemetery Raphael and his wife clearly have so much personal conviction and purpose in what they're doing and I absolutely loved to support their passion in cleaning up the area. I personally felt as if God felt ever so present on this trip, with the people we were helping and the staff that provided food, shelter, and scripture to us. I'm extremely grateful I attended this trip after my personal concerns regarding last year's mission trip, but God clearly intended not only for me, but for everybody who attended this trip to be together and in St. Louis to help, assist and love in the name of Him.

Alia Machlet

Mission Trip Reflection

I learned many lessons from this mission trip. There were a few experiences that really impacted my view on things in my life that I sometimes take for granted. For example, I worked at the food pantry and when we were there we helped to pass out food to people and it was an eye-opening experience to see what these people had to go through just to get food. They had to qualify for some things, and get a ticket for other things. Also while working at the food pantry, we cleaned out a room-sized cooler and we had to take out all of the food and sort out the bad and moldy food from the fresh produce. And it really surprised me that if we didn't come they may have handed out the food and expected people to eat it.

It made me feel really good that I could help out with that and that I was making a difference. While working at the food pantry it changed my perspective on the homeless and less fortunate. I didn't think they could be happy with their lives because of their situation, and because they couldn't afford a better life, but I was proved terribly wrong. As it turns out, they were the happiest, nicest people I have ever met. And it turned out to be a very happy, friendly community who care for one another.

Also while helping out at the food bank our group had the privilege of sitting in on a Narcotics Anonymous meeting and it was truly an eye-opening experience. Prior to the meeting, my knowledge of any drug users was that they were miserable people who had thrown their lives away. But when I was listening to all of their stories it totally changed my perspective and showed me that not all of them were bad people. They were just normal people who had made a mistake and were trying to fix their lives.

In conclusion, this has probably been the most rewarding thing I've done in my life and it changed me so much. It taught me not to take things for granted and to be grateful for what I have. I am so glad I participated in this Mission trip and I will definitely do it again next year.

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

-Luke 6:38