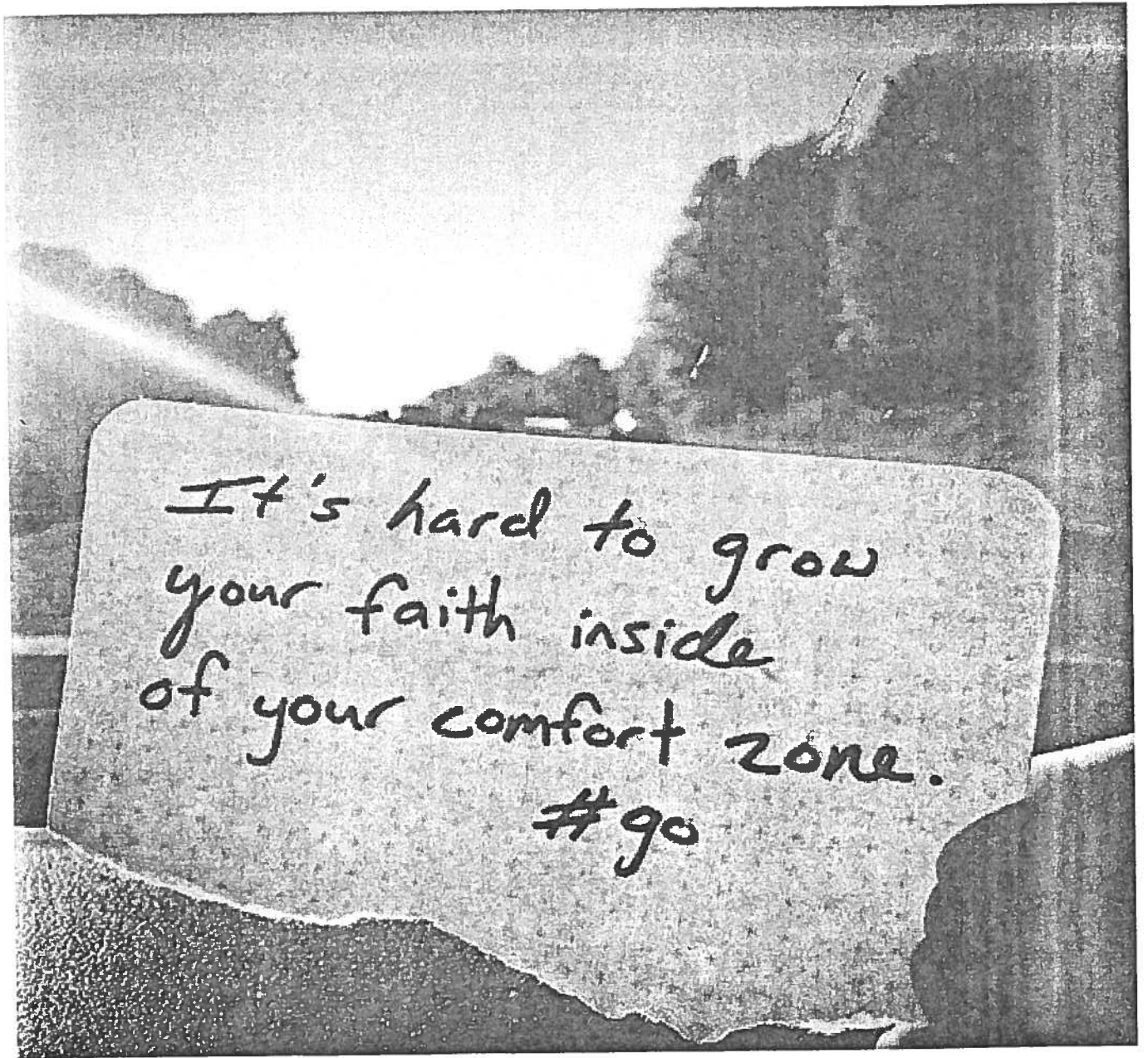


Deacon Ed



It's hard to grow  
your faith inside  
of your comfort zone.  
#90

Springfield, Kentucky

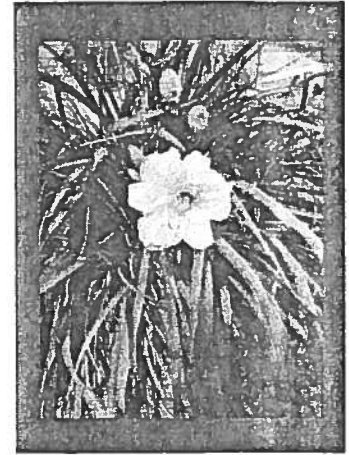
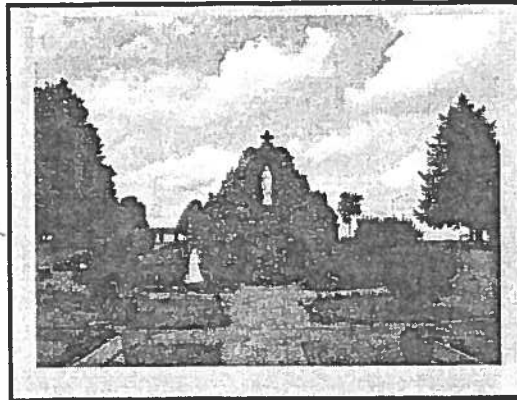
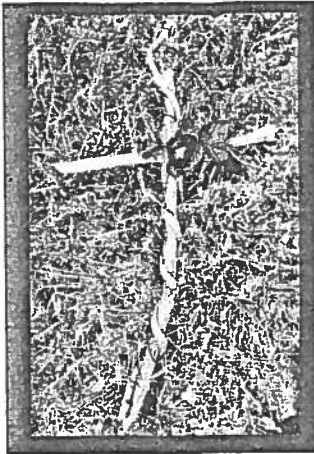
Reflections 2016



June 19 - 25 , 2016

## We Are The Body of Christ! Let Justice Roll...

*YNIA Mission Trip: Springfield, Kentucky*



### *God's Beautiful Gifts and Blessings:*

At the conclusion of each day on our mission trip, we were asked to reflect on two things:

- 1.) *How did I see, smell, taste, touch, or feel God's presence??* What gifts / blessings of God did I experience throughout my work, the environment, and people I encountered?
- 2.) *How did I use my gifts / blessings* from God to motivate my team, strengthen the community, and inspire the people that I encountered?

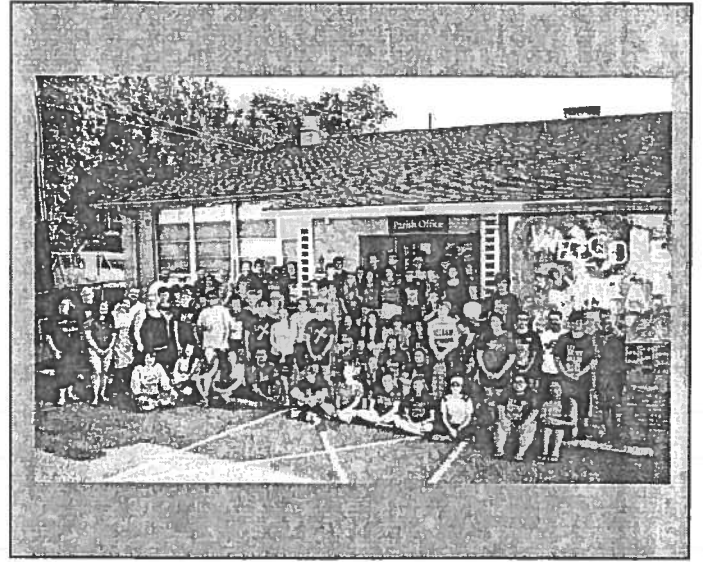
The majority of the work required by my team at the sites throughout the week was painting and pulling weeds. During the long hours I thought about a variety of random things such as...

*I needed to pull the weeds and complete other chores at my own mother's house when I returned home. Why do weeds, rocks, and sticks even exist? Why would God create poison ivy, wasps, and so many creepy bugs? What's the point of painting this fence and these guardrails?*

I will say that it is much easier to have a team to complete these types of chores. When you all work together you can accomplish so much. Not everyone has family members and friends to help them out. When you see a "broken down house" , don't think of it as a "broken home with owners who don't care". Maybe they just need some help, some teamwork. Not all people and communities have the necessary resources for jobs and supplies. We all have goals and desires but some can only be reached with someone to lean on.

Therefore, I feel one of the greatest gifts we gave during the week was that of our time. Time to help beautify the town, someone's yard, a cemetery, church grounds, schools, and parks. Time to listen to the people of the community, their stories of struggle and faith. Time to pray together, share a meal, and sing praises for the many gifts we sometimes forget to thank God for. Even time to appreciate the creepy bugs and all God's creatures. We each have a very special purpose in the eyes of God.

We may not be professional carpenters, painters, or gardeners. But we have the skills to learn and grow. We can use sticks to make symbols of faith or music, rocks to build monuments and places of worship. It's the passion within us that needs to shine, weeds of sin that need to be pulled, and God's love to strengthen us.



***We Are All Brothers and Sisters in Christ:***

Each and every day I was incredibly impressed with my small group's work ethic! As we bonded and reflected throughout the week, we concluded that the following characteristics contributed in making us such a strong team: ***Motivation, Passion, Loyalty, Integrity, and Leadership***

We pumped each other up with morning music, singing on our way to the work sites, taking time to dance and laugh on our breaks throughout the day. We reminded each other to stay hydrated and keep going despite the heat. Best of all though, we each seemed to naturally take turns being the leader. We set goals, shared ideas, and worked like a machine. I'm so proud of each person's dedication, positive attitude, and appreciation for each other!! Not everyone takes the time to say thank you or well done!! Even the people in Springfield saw our team in action daily and it was the most uplifting feeling each time they honked, gave a thumbs up, and told us what a great job we were doing. Gratitude is truly priceless.

***The final question I asked myself and reflected on many times during the week is "Why Kentucky?" There is so much work to be done in our own Chicago neighborhoods, why drive 6 hours south to help a less populated community??***

I realized that if you don't get out into the world, you'll miss out on opportunities to meet some of the most amazing people that could touch your heart and soul in a way you never imagined. Being Catholic is Universal. We should pray and celebrate our faith together with all of God's children. We should share our songs and praises with each other and spread the love around the world. I know that the little 3 year old girl we met won't remember our names or where we were from, but she'll remember the group of strangers that came to her grandmother's house to clean it up and make it safe and beautiful for her to play around. I pray that the spirit she found in our friendships will motivate her to spread the love of Christ in her future years. It's like how they say "smiling is contagious." We need to remember to "preach the Gospel at ALL times, and when necessary, use words." People don't remember what you say, they remember what you do. We need to take this love from Kentucky and bring it back to our own communities to share.

The mission trip to Springfield Kentucky was my first but through my brothers I have heard about many over the years. They would tell me how the cities they went to were so run down and poverty stricken I couldn't believe it. That is why this year I went into mission expecting the same, a town full of abandoned buildings, broken houses, and people living on the streets.

However, when we arrived in Kentucky that is not what I saw. There was obviously help needed but not to the extent I was expecting, at least that's what I thought. The town seemed fairly nice with some areas slightly worse than others. That is what brought me to ask the question, Why are we here, it doesn't seem like they need our help? That was my mind set up until the second we found out who we would be working for.

A woman who was wheelchair bound for the rest of her life, a grandmother who was forced to raise her grandchildren after the passing of her daughter, and countless others. After realizing the people of Kentucky didn't need the help because everything was so destroyed it was beyond their ability to fix, it was because they were all in situations that put them in such a struggling position, they literally could not do the work. After coming to that realization it allowed me to see that not only do people need help with physical damages to them and their property, but people with personal problems and situations need the help just as much. Not only was the work humbling, it made me realize how good I have it in my life.

After this trip I have come to appreciate everything I have in life so much more. The work was a great part of the trip but it was also amazing getting to meet new kids my age from different areas of the country with the same focus and interest in helping others. Overall the trip to Kentucky was amazing because it allowed me to provide help to the people there, but even more so, it allowed me to see that sometimes the people you least expect can have something huge going on in their life that affects them more than you can know. So treat everyone with the kindness and openness you give to the people living in run down homes or on the streets because you never know what someone is going through.

### **Nick Redman**

This mission trip was my first mission trip I've gone on and it was one of the best experiences of my life! My work group worked with a wonderful lady named Cassie Robinson who had M.S. and was wheelchair bound. She was the nicest lady I've ever met. She tutors out of her home every day except for weekends and Wednesdays from 9:30 in the morning till 6 at night.

While at her house we painted her foundation and her shutters brown then we painted an iron fence black and stained her deck and front porch. Also on one of the days we were there we went inside and cleaned some of the stuff that she couldn't and organized shelves and stuff. I met a lot of new friends not just from our church but from other churches too and it was a trip I will not forget.

### **Mikey Ryan**

Well starting off on a good note this year we spent the majority of our car ride sleeping instead of making fun of each other's lasagna recipes. But going into Springfield I was expecting to see more poverty than there actually was and even saw some pretty nice homes. I spent my week with my work group helping a custodian and these two boys keeping maintenance over the school. Even though the school was nice and well kept, the only ones working on it was Miss Delisa and Josh and Jake. As the week passed my mindset changed from "oh were just janitors for the week." To "If we weren't here they would be overwhelmed with work."

Together we emptied out two sheds behind the school and loaded them on a truck, we painted so many railings and doors, and we cleaned out and wiped down the classrooms. I thought about how it took nine people to do those things a week, imagine how much longer it would've taken them. I felt I have made a difference to them.

We also got to know them on our lunch breaks. They told us about the town and how everyone basically knows everyone since it's so small, and we made fun of each other's accents. They were very friendly along with the parents of the children who had summer activities at the school. Thinking back to Tinley we're not exactly urban but we're closer to rather than a rural area like Springfield. Passing someone at Euro Fresh or down the streets of Chicago you barely even acknowledge each other, while here the people greet each other whether they're a stranger or not. Even so most likely they knew each other. It would probably be impossible for everyone to know everyone in Tinley, but I feel that we could be friendlier and greet a stranger or just a smile.

I reflected on this when I heard the scripture "I was a stranger but you welcomed me" there was more too it but it was something like that. There wasn't independent reflection this year like there was with youth works so unfortunately I could not read and interpret the Bible in my own way and reflect it to my personal experience over the course of the week but like all mission trips it was definitely a bonding experience with my friends and chaperones. For some reason, this year for I just realized how good I have it and how thankful I am for my family, friends, and the life God blessed me with and how I can repay him back by helping a less fortunate community with my closest friends.

### **Mike Letz**

Mission trip this year was a real learning experience for me. I worked at a school with one janitor and maintenance person. We worked around the school cleaning and painting things to brighten up the school. She had two volunteers there that helped us. We got along with them very well. She always said how she was grateful that we were there. I got very close with my workgroup and all the other kids from our church. I really enjoyed meeting all the kids from the other churches. The overall trip was fun and even through all the tension, I enjoyed it very much.

### **Jack Meskill**

## Who is my Neighbor?

A few weeks ago the Gospel reading was Luke 10:25 Who is my Neighbor and Fr Joe Mulcrone had a meaningful and inspiring Homily. Fr Joe discussed all the recent violence with the police shootings and the police being ambushed. He went on to talk about the streets of Chicago and about his recent trip to Northern Ireland where the Protestants and Catholics have been fighting for over 400 years and as Fr Joe put it many people just react or partake in the violence in Northern Ireland but have no idea of why they are fighting with each other.

When I watch the news and hear about the senseless murders and shootings of innocent people. From Orlando to Dallas to Minnesota to Chicago, innocent people are dying at the hands of others that have a radical view of religion or lack of respect for life. I wonder as I am sure many of us do, how did this person get to this point of committing such crimes? What is happening in our world? What can people do to protect ourselves and others?

Who is my neighbor? As Fr Joe put it in his Homily, we are all neighbors, we are all part of one family, God's family. God created all of us to be the same. Not one of us is greater than the other in God's eyes. God did not create white versus black, gay versus straight or Muslim versus Christian. He created us in his image. How can we get back to who is my neighbor?

Back in late June myself and 3 other adult leaders took a group of 21 teens to Springfield, KY for our annual TNT mission trip. Springfield has an interesting history in the growth of the catholic faith in our country. The region is home to several monasteries', mother homes, religious orders and numerous catholic churches including the oldest church in the US west of the Appalachian Mountains. It is also the home of the parents of Abraham Lincoln.

Our group met many wonderful people on this trip. The work they did supported so many parts of the community from a disabled woman who tutors local students, a grandmother now raising her grandchildren, a catholic school with 1 person to perform all the building maintenance and a park employee that volunteers his time to support the kids of Springfield.

Who are our neighbors?

Brenda is the grandmother who lost her husband years ago and makes \$12/hr at a call center and was hoping to retire soon then the unexpected happened. Her daughter died less than a year ago and was a single mother to two teenagers. She explained that her hopes of retiring had to change and now is a "mom" again. Her house needed repairs and the teens did a great job in taking down a bad deck and building a new one, fixing the landscape and cleaning the siding around the house. A local man Johnny Coyle was a retiree and had a disability but did whatever he could to help us. Bringing tools and supplies to help us complete the project. Johnny was what I would call an old southern gentleman. He would give the shirt off his back to help someone. Johnny is our neighbor and Brenda's; the teens and Brenda are neighbors. No one cared that Brenda is black and Johnny is white. What we all saw is someone needed help and Jesus brought us to Springfield to be someone's neighbor

The park employee lives in a different town but comes to Springfield to help maintain the sports fields for the kids and runs the local baseball league. He also is a local high school boys'

basketball coach but before that role he spent several years coaching the girls team. He explained that at one time 18 out of the 21 girls on the basketball team came from homes without a father. Not only did he find himself as a coach but he was also a father figure, teacher, friend, confidant and mentor. He fulfilled his role in all these areas and was grateful to be there for all his players. He was their neighbor.

I have been thinking about “who is my neighbor” now for weeks. It has stuck in my mind on since leaving that Mass with Fr Joe. I know part of it due to writing this reflection but part of it is how do we bring that message to others, who is my neighbor? The teens on the mission trip truly were following Jesus’s teaching but how can we bring this to more people? How can we do this more often than the teens once a year mission trip?

We can help our neighbors in Tinley Park by going to retirement homes and visiting. We can help those who live alone and help them with repairs or cleaning at their home. We can see what needs to be fixed at the Daybreak Shelter or even just volunteer there to cook for the homeless. Volunteer at a food bank, Together We Cope, with groups at St Julie, go on a mission trip yourself, or many other organizations that support people in need. We can talk to neighbors that we try to avoid. We can feed the hungry, visit the sick or imprisoned and so much more.

The teens at St Julie over the years have served as wonderful examples of being someone’s neighbors and I pray they will continue to serve as someone’s neighbor for the rest of their lives. If we all can make the efforts of our teen group once per year, how big of a difference will this make in our community? Jesus says in Mathew 25 “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

I know that the problems of the world go far beyond this reflection and one man’s hopes or dreams. But where do we start? In 1968 after Martin Luther King was murdered, Elvis Presley had a song “If I can dream” and part of the words really can reflect the world as it is today. (yes I got Elvis into a reflection!)

“If I can dream of a better land  
Where all my brothers walk hand in hand  
Tell me why, oh why, oh why can't my dream come true”

Can we look at one simple act of kindness by all of us that may turn into acts of kindness for thousands?

Working to fulfill the meaning of “who is my neighbor” is the easy part. The hard part is starting.

**Mr. Tom O'Donnell**



## **Kentucky Mission Reflection by Joel Machlet**

This being my third mission trip, it has been the most beneficial for me. The last two that I went on were loads of fun but I was always in my family's shadow I was there as Josh's cousin or Robbie's brother and now I think I got to be myself more take more charge. Really appreciate what we were doing for the community. Although I may have not gotten anything material in return a heartfelt thank you really touched me. Now knowing that I helped someone that otherwise would not have gotten any help is a lot more than anything material. Also every year my group of friends expands more and more. Not just with new kids from St Julie's but from different church groups and parishes from all over the country.

With only one year left of mission trips through St. Julie I really have to make my last one count and encourage more people to go on the mission Trips. The trips are really eye opening from many different aspects from the leaders past experiences to other Groups work sites and how they are help someone by doing something so small as painting a fence or some rusty guard rails, rebuilding a new deck, helping clean a school because there is only one person to do everything around the school. It's not just the big picture but all of the little things to make that one big picture. I will leave each mission trip with an improved view on life and what true values are. Thanks for the opportunity to be able to come on these amazing trips.

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This was my second mission trip in TNT. It was definitely a change of scenery compared to YouthWorks. Throughout the week my relationships with other TNT members grew, along with the relationship of my brother and I. We grew closer and watched out for each other during the week, since it was my brothers first time away from home without one of our parents. As a church, we did find some difficulties during the week but they made us stronger and we made up.

Helping at Miss Brenda's house was rewarding because I can now say that I helped build a deck (drilled 2 nails since I wasn't trusted with the power drill) but as a work group we made a huge impact on Miss Brenda's life.

Another big impact was a man named Johnny, who was part of Miss Brenda's church. He came over every day to see if we needed any supplies, extra help, or an extra pair of eyes. His open mind and selflessness made me open my eyes in my life. There are other people that need a hand more than I do, and I have more than enough time to go and help them.

Springfield, Kentucky was a learning experience for me that I will never forget. I can now say I have friends in New Hampshire, Detroit, and Green Bay. Staying up at night with our New Hampshire friends comparing each other's "accents" always made me laugh. I hope that we will be able to meet up again with our new friends despite the distance.

**Until next year,  
Claire Meskill**

**Seth Huisenga**  
**Mission 2016 Reflection**

Going into this mission trip I knew nobody, but by the end I became a part of a family. A family who accepts everyone and best of all makes each person feel happy and loved.

Besides the great relationships I have developed in this trip, I have gained a great appreciation and love for God and the less fortunate people. During this week I worked for a family of kids and a grandmother who was not able to retire because of lack of money. With no support for this family we were their only hope for a look into a brighter future. A future that would provide food on the table along with happiness and faith in the souls of the family.

This trip helped strengthen my relationship with God as well as the wonderful people I was working with this week. It was by far the best part of my summer so far, and I am very thankful. God bless.

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Mission trip is one of the best things you can do over your summer break. Not only because you are helping but also because you have so much fun and get to meet new and awesome people.

Every year I am always shocked with what you find out in the areas that you help and this year was no different than any other. No matter where you go you will always find nice amazing people that deserve and need your help and it is always the best feeling of accomplishment that you could help these people in need.

This year I got to help a lady named Miss Cassie and she was the nicest person you will ever meet. She made helping her all the more accomplished. This year might have been my last as a kid it will not be my last year attending mission

**Jonathan Martinez**

Just a small video (*check out Kayla's Flipgram*) and the pictures in it are what I'm going to remember most about our 2016 mission trip to Springfield Kentucky. This mission trip I made an amazing connection with kids from TNT new and old. We all worked together in a way that brought fun into our hard work. My group in particular worked with a wonderful woman named Miss Cassie who was diagnosed with MS and is wheelchair bound. We helped her out by doing yard work where she couldn't get to and cleaning areas she couldn't reach. She showed me that even without the ability to get everywhere on your own you can always do it with some help. 😊 I may not have enjoyed this mission trip as much as my others, but i enjoyed the hard work and friendships that were made this week 😊 Can't wait for next year!

**Kayla Wyleta**

Shelly Lazowski

**Mission Trip Reflection  
Springfield, Kentucky**

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others" –Gandhi

I believe that this quote best describes the reasons why individuals decide to help others in need. An individual's true personality and values are shown through the service of others. This year was my first year volunteering as an adult chaperone for St. Julie TNT Mission Trip to Springfield, Kentucky. I was actively involved in the TNT youth group during my high school years by going on 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. TNT friends are still to this day some of my best friends.

Making the decision to chaperone the mission trip this year was one of the best decisions I could have made. With currently completing my master's degree, working as an athletic trainer, and finding time for family and friends, this mission trip has allowed me to reflect and appreciate how important the service of others can be on a community. When we first arrived in Springfield, Kentucky we were unaware what type of work each group would be doing, but after a week of working at St. Dominic School along side Mrs. Delisa, it was one of the most memorable experiences. Every summer Mrs. Delisa cleans the entire school by herself. She has been blessed to have two high school students Jacob and Josh who volunteer their entire summer to help, along with the help of our small group to get any projects complete. To see the gratitude and appreciation of the Springfield community was an unforgettable experience. The amount

of smiles that our groups have brought to this area was beyond belief. We were true examples of servant leaders in the community of Springfield, Kentucky.

Our daily tasks included cleaning/ organizing the interior and exterior of the elementary school, painting both the interior and exterior of the building, and various other projects. My small group was an amazing group of kids that were hard working, dedicated, and determined to complete any given task that was asked of them. Not only did we complete numerous tasks throughout the week, we built relationships with the town of Springfield that will last a lifetime. The impact that our St. Julie TNT group had on this community will be talked about for many years.

Overall, I am very pleased with my decision to chaperone the mission trip this year and be able to give back to the youth group that has helped shape me into the person I am today. This trip has granted me many blessings that I will bring back to my everyday life and has allowed me strengthen my faith and gain new friendships. Always remember, never miss an opportunity to help others, you may never know how it can change your life for the better. "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." – Aesop

## Mission Trip Reflection 2016

Emily Macijunas

“Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”- *Martin Luther King Jr.*

I feel incredibly blessed to have served the community of Springfield, Kentucky this past week. Although the community was not as impoverished as other communities I have served on past trips- I know the work we accomplished was appreciated by the humble people of Springfield. Springfield, Kentucky is a hidden gem. It is a small community that most people would not give a second glance, but if you take the time to get to know it you will see its charm. The town was founded in 1793 and is filled to the brim with history. It is also home to quirky sights such as a donkey-shaped tree. Most of all, it is home to southern hospitality. From the first day at worksite the people showed us kindness and expressed how grateful they were to have us in their community.

I had the privilege of working on two worksites. The first day I helped weed around and take apart the deck of a woman's home. The woman's name was Brenda and over lunch she told my work crew about her and the struggles she has experienced. The rest of the week my group worked at the direction of a city maintenance worker named Bobby. Bobby does all kind of handiwork around the city. Our tasks were to paint the front and back of an old fence and then paint guardrails around the city and do a little weeding. It was an honor to work for a man as kind as Bobby. He was always visiting us while we worked, checking in on us or bringing us Gatorade to make sure we were staying hydrated. One day he even surprised us with a tour around the city! We got to meet many of the townspeople and took a trip to city hall where they gave us souvenirs and the mayor herself thanked us for all the hard work we had done for the city of Springfield.

The thing that continues to bring me back to mission every year is the fact that I leave thinking I'm going to help change a community, but I come back with the community having changed me. Walking around town so many people stopped to comment on how well we painted the fence and how long they had been trying to get someone to paint it. That was the reassurance my crew and I needed after spending a long day painting the back of the fence that we thought no one would see. As the week came to a close we all realized how attached we had become to Bobby. We framed a picture of us in front of the fence and when we gave it to him he told us he would never forget us. He said he has met a lot of kids but we were by far the best group he's met and as he gave each of us a parting hug, we saw him tearing up.

This year's mission to Springfield, Kentucky was my third mission trip. Each trip I've been on has a special place in my heart and I look forward to seeing what other communities we visit and how we help them.

## Abai McCorry Mission Trip Reflection

Embarking on my final TNT mission trip, many memories came flooding back to me. Previous to this trip, I had gone on three others. I consider each trip I've went on special and unique in their own way. This one, however, I was hesitant for. This is the first year we've gone on a trip with Young Neighbors in Action, not with Youthworks. I had no idea how this trip was going to be run, what we were going to be doing throughout the day, and most importantly, what the food was going to be like. We were told to leave with an open heart and an open mind, so that's what I did.

Although the week posed many obstacles to our group as a whole, the majority of us of us tried to stay optimistic. Ms. Cassie and her wonderfully optimistic outlook on life is what kept my head up throughout the week. My group had the privilege of working with Ms. Cassie for the majority of our trip. She was a wonderful woman who was tragically stricken with MS. Although, if you ask her, she doesn't see things that way. Ms. Cassie was a school teacher and principal for many years, and had infinite stories to share with us. I felt like I developed a real connection with Ms. Cassie because I will be studying Elementary Education next year at my university. Regardless of the limited mobility that Ms. Cassie has, that didn't stop her from continuing her passion. She began to tutor after school and all throughout the summer. This summer, she tutors local children from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with only a ten minute break in between students. She works with a wide range of students, every age to every ability level. She even has a handful of students that struggle with things socially, so she just talks to them to build their confidence levels and work through social situations.

Even though my group seemed to be doing small home improvement projects inside and outside of Ms. Cassie's home, it was evident how much she appreciated us. From taking down and giving her shutters a fresh coat of "French Toast" paint, to reorganizing her bathroom closet to make things more accessible, Ms. Cassie was more than grateful. One day while we were working, she left early to attend an awards ceremony. Ms. Cassie was waiting for us the next morning, sitting on her front porch, beaming with excitement. She was awarded outstanding citizen of the year, no shock to any of us there. That was the second award of that nature I happened to notice around her house that week, which speaks for itself.

Taking home only my thoughts, memories, and a stuffed suitcase, I couldn't help but feel a wide range of emotions. Sad, because this was my last mission trip with all of my very best friends. Exhaustion, from lack of sleep during the week. But most importantly, joy. Joyful that I formed so many new relationships throughout the week. Joy of the way Springfield Kentucky touched my heart. Joy in the little things that I can bring back to my community and continue doing service work for as long as I am able.

## Mission Trip 2016 Reflection Paper

Tim Macijunas

The past several years I have especially looked forward to Father's Day for many reasons. One of them is that I have had the pleasure of attending the St. Julie Mission Trip. I must say that this week has most enjoyable experience thus far. The chaperones that I spent the week with were an outstanding bunch of people. There were many "moments" throughout the week that will stay with me forever. On the drive down I was wondering what type of town Springfield, Kentucky was and what things we may be doing. As we arrived in town it was apparent that Springfield was not as an impoverished area as was the previous town locations we visited, Cairo, IL and Steubenville, OH. I soon found out that just because a town does not have boarded up or vacant houses, it does not mean that they do not need assistance or help.

My group was assigned to work at Ms. Cassie's house. She is a wheelchair bound woman with MS. She was a teacher prior to being stricken with MS, and tutors children in her home to continue to "teach" others and as a means of financial support. She is unable to maintain the outside of her home or do some major cleaning, due to her being in a wheelchair and does not have the means to pay someone to do it for her. The first of my "moments" was the look on her face, when we arrived on her front screen porch. The joy she had on her face, was indescribable, you would have thought we were bringing her a check for a million dollars. I guess the help she knew we would be providing her was that valuable to her. She provided us a list of things that needed to be done. She showed us around her house and showed us what needed to be done. She also explained that on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays she tutors. She had children coming in non stop from when we got there til when we left. It was inspirational to see the time she dedicates each week to helping others.

I was once again blessed with an outstanding group for the week. They were very hard working, respectful, dedicated to what they were doing and got along well with each other. They were excited to begin working and got everything that they needed and were amazing. They were willing to do whatever was needed and did so under extreme heat and conditions, without complaint. Although they worked hard they also made time for some fun and interaction with me and others getting to know each other better, which is an important part of the week as well. I looked forward to lunchtime, because it gave me an additional opportunity to get to know each of them. They worked very well together. Another "moment" and picture that I will keep, took place on the first day. One of the shutters on the house was difficult to get to and it was hard to position the ladder and do so safely so the whole group held onto the ladder as one of them climbed up. The picture demonstrated the true spirit of team work and what the mission trip is about. I was amazed at the amount of work that we were able to get done in the first two days. We took down, painted and put back up her shutters, painted her foundation, the back deck, the patio railings and various outdoor fixtures. Ms. Cassie would come outside during breaks between tutoring sessions and the gratitude and pleasure she shared about the work we did was

very rewarding. On Wednesday she had us cleaning and assisting her in going through some stuff that she could not reach to go through before now. It was interesting because many of the items that she found as we went through them, had a story with them and she shared those with us.

Every morning, she would be out on the porch waiting for us with a huge smile. Seeing how she interacted with our group, I could tell that she was an outstanding teacher. The second day we asked if we could take a group photo with her and we did. We took a selfie and she shared her excitement in saying that it was her first "selfie" ever. We had it printed and framed for her and she displayed it someplace that she will be able to see it every day. One of our group identifiers was a yellow bracelet with turtles on it. We shared one with her and she proudly wore it the remainder of the week. On Thursday which was going to be our last day with her, she asked if she could pray with us and gave each one of us a bracelet. On Friday, we had to go to another location to work and I must say I missed being able to see that smile as we drove up. While we were there, she was notified that she was going to be given an award for being an inspiration to the community. She is an extraordinary woman and I am truly blessed to have gotten to know her, and will keep in contact with her as we are now Facebook friends. When not working, there was quite a bit to do as well. I liked the fact that this year there was a little bit more down time so that things were not as rushed. There was adequate time for prayer and reflection. Several nights there were activities that were fun and interesting. One evening we spent time getting to learn about the community. We were "guided" around town by one of the staff, Becca, who took us to various places (churches, bridges, cemeteries, and a state park) in and around town and shared with us stories and folklore about them. We then went back and reported what we saw to the larger group. One such place was the donkey tree. What we were told about it was an old farmer used to beat this donkey and one day beat it to death. Where the donkey died or is buried this tree grew out of it. It looks a lot like a donkey. Supposedly if you touch it you will get in an accident. If you put an apple in its mouth its supposed to bring good luck. Needless to say we put an apple in its mouth. In closing it was a week full of fun, memories, friendships and good times. I have many more instances where I saw many of our teens doing remarkable things, but need to limit this for the sake of space. I am very fortunate to be able to attend this trip each year.



## Springfield Kentucky

This year was my very first mission trip and it was a very fun and refreshing trip. I made a lot of new friends from St. Julies and friends from Detroit and New Hampshire. I also had the opportunity to meet the people of Springfield who were very happy we came to help them.

Going into the mission trip for the first time was scary at first. It was my first time away from home for that long and I didn't know a lot of people. But I felt very welcomed by everyone and got to know them. After the long drive down we got to meet the other groups. One of those groups was the New Hampshire groups who invited me over to play go fish. Through that game of go fish I formed a bond with them that lasted the whole week and has continued to last ever since we left.

The first day of work my group was working to take down a deck and we were expecting to rebuild that deck except there was a slight change in plans. My group was told we had to paint a long fence. No one in the group was pleased with this mainly because we felt there was no point to painting a fence. We didn't understand who we were helping. Then we met Bobby who was a worker for the town. He brought us Gatorade and thanked us for the help. We then began the long task under the hot southern sun. When the group finally was looking at the bright side of things, we ran out of water base paint. We had to finish the long task using the strong scented oil base paint...ugh. We finished the fence early on Wednesday so Bobby took us to paint some guard rails. Later that day Bobby came and took us around town and then to lunch. It was when we got to meet the people of the town that we felt good about what we did. People actually knew the fence we told them about and where happy we did it, and so were we.

I feel very blessed to have been able to go on this mission trip for many reasons. I got to help people who needed it, I made a lot of new friendships and met a lot of great people. I am excited for next year's mission trip where I can meet more new people and hopefully get to see some friends I made from this trip.

Matt Palubin

I would like to say how glad I am that my friends (mostly Natalie) convinced me to go to Kentucky this year for a few reasons to be specific. The first being it was a great experience to be able to get a better perspective of how life can be for certain people. In this particular case not really the poverty, but just the help they needed.

For example my work site was Ms.Cassie's house. To be able to see how much we helped her with just common yard work and chores really showed me how nice I have things and how lucky I am. The second and probably the most important reason I'm glad I got to attend is because of the relationships I was able to create with not only kids from the other churches but even becoming better friends with the kids from our church. I had a blast meeting so many new friends who I have also kept in touch with. Overall the experience and relationships I gained from Kentucky will stay with me forever and I am very thankful I got to be a part of the trip.

**Mitch Redman**

### **Mission Trip Reflection 2016 – Jack Ruane**

High School can be a tough and challenging time for many who live through it. Whether academically or socially, challenges and hardships always happen to make the experience harder. But, every since I've first went on my first mission trip to Cass Lake in 2013, I've always had an escape to these problems. Not only an escape, but even a solution, as the social world of high school is left behind on a mission trip and only friendly, loving, and caring people surround you for a week. This is rare and makes me cherish each mission trip even more. Mission trips have absolutely changed my life and have by far been some of the best and most rewarding experiences of my high school age.

### **mission trip by Natalie Harmening**

This year was much different than every other year. It was stressed to us after the retreat that we need to help our neighbors no matter their socio economic status. This mission trip reminded me of treating others how you want to be treated. It's easy to look past someone who seems a lot like you but everyone still needs a helping hand sometimes. I'm glad I haven't broken anything yet because I touched a cursed tree.

Pulling up to Holy Trinity Church I did not have a clue why we were there. The community was nice and Springfield KY is honestly a place where I would move to.

As we began working, my group was assigned to paint a quarter mile fence that backed up to a forest and an abandoned barn. We were all a little upset when we got assigned to paint the fence because we didn't really see a point in having to paint it, but then we met the man who is in charge of the parks area named Bobby. He was so grateful for everything we did for him. He saw the fence when we were finished painting it and he told us that this is the best it has ever looked. The sight of the fence and our presence there brought Bobby to tears. This really showed me how significant the work we were doing for the community really was. Every day, Bobby would come to our work site and check up on us. He brought us Gatorade, candy bars, and he even gave us a tour of the city. One day, we were painting a guard rail in a neighborhood and one woman who lived in the house next to the guard rail came out and told us how grateful she was that we were doing this for the community. She then returned with popsicles for all of us. And then a couple hours later Bobby returned and told us to stop what we were doing that he was taking us for lunch. We were all shocked. He was honestly the most down to earth man I met and I am glad I had the opportunity to meet him. Bobby also introduced us to the mayor who thanked us and told us that she was trying to find someone to paint the fence for over two years and now a project that would have taken Bobby a week to do by himself took my group two days to complete. We all realized why the work we were doing was significant. Yes, the city might have looked nice, but the city was up kept by volunteers and only a few paid maintenance guys.

Before we left Bobby for the last time we gave him a picture frame with a picture we took earlier in the week and when he came back he told us he put it in his office so he could see it every day. Right as we were leaving I introduced Bobby to everyone in our group and he smiled and thanked me for everything I did. Honestly, there might be a lot of Bobbys from where we are from, but as I told him, he might be the best Bobby I know. Hopefully one day we can meet again whether it is just a short encounter or another volunteer experience with him.

### **Tommy Mittler**

I strongly believe that mission trips are about serving others not only by the tasks and jobs we do but by the connections we make with others in that community. I painted a fence and was shown around Springfield by Bobby and got to meet some people from city hall including the mayor. Also I learned facts while on the scavenger hunt because I was in the van with the tour guide and she grew up in the town.

I loved Kentucky and getting to know the history and people. That is the reason I enjoy going on mission trips is to be able to relate and hear the stories of others. I will continue to go on mission trips in college.

### **Nicole Ward**

Honestly, this trip gave me mixed emotions. Well, let's just say I met three amazing people on this trip that I will never forget.

They really taught me a lot about my faith and myself. This week I worked at Mrs. Delisa's school. She is the only custodian there, and needed all the help that she could get. At first, I was really upset by the group that I got and the location of our site. I thought it wasn't going to be fun and that we wouldn't be able to interact with anyone while we were there. But the first day changed my whole perspective. Mrs. Delisa greeted us with open arms when we got there and introduced us to two boys, Jake and Josh, who would be helping us this week. Throughout the week, we continued to talk to them and get to know them better. Their small town way of living is so comforting to hear about and to actually see. Just how close and caring everyone was to everyone was truly amazing and that's what I feel everyone should be like.

Overall, my work site was so amazing and the best one I have had on any mission trip. Being able to connect with the people of Kentucky and hear about their faith was truly inspiring. They were so welcoming of us, and Mrs. Delisa even brought her new six week old puppy Chip in so we could play with him. Southern hospitality is all that comes to mind when I think about Kentucky. Shelly was also an amazing chaperone and she did such a great job of being by herself for the first time.

Thursday night we had a scavenger that was super fun because we got to learn about the little things in the community. I like that stuff the most. My faith was strengthened this week by Jake and Josh. They volunteered their summer to help out at the school. That's inspiring to me. So when I get home, I would like to continue to volunteer and give my free time away to those who need help. The first night I was cranky about my work site and group, and by the end of the week I didn't want to leave. We just have to let go and put all our faith into God's hand.

**Melissa Ward**

### **Mary Kate Donegan Mission Reflection**

After a semi-short ride of 7.5 hours, we had finally pulled up to Holy Trinity Church. We were immediately told to go to the gym and get our badges and water bottles. We couldn't wait to get out and stretch and be our usual loud selves. By Saturday mass everyone was laughing along with us and told us they were sad to see us go.

Heading to work site I became confused. My group worked at Miss Brenda's house where we power washed her house, rebuilt her porch, and did some gardening. The neighborhood she lived in was actually kind of nice so I wasn't too sure why we were there. At the end of the week however, when we showed Brenda all the work we had done, she was overwhelmed to the point of tears. It was right then that I realized it doesn't matter where you are on your trip; it's all about the end product you come out with. Despite the fact that I probably would move to Springfield, I liked that Brenda was able to have a beautiful home again thanks to us. This was my last mission trip and while I'm sad that I won't get to do one again-for a little while that is- I'm excited to move on to the next chapter of my life and see what God has in store.