



OYMT REVIEW

Handiwork: Created to Serve

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” Ephesians 2:10



To show our appreciation to all of you, our stockholders, who helped make the Orthodox Youth Mission Team trip to West Virginia possible this past July, **we cordially invite you to join any one of our appreciation events** and enjoy some delicious homemade food.

You’ll see a slideshow of our trip and hear from members of our team about the amazing experiences we had on our mission trip.

We hope you can make it!

PHOTO ALBUM: If you cannot attend, please view our photo gallery at www.oymt.info.

Stockholder

Appreciation Events

Presentations will be held at the following parishes after liturgy:

Sunday Sept. 25, 11:00am

St. John’s Orthodox Church
364 Mill Hill Avenue

Bridgeport, CT 06610

Sunday Oct. 2, 11:30am

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
74 Joes Hill Road

Danbury, CT 06811

Sunday Oct. 16, 11:30pm

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
46 Seymour Street

Yonkers, NY 10701

Sunday Oct. 23, 11:30am

St. John’s Orthodox Church
145 Broad Street

Perth Amboy, NJ 08861

Sunday Oct. 23, 12pm

St. Barbara’s
Greek Orthodox Church

480 Racebrook Road

Orange, CT 06477

All are welcome!



One Fruitful Week in July

The Orthodox Youth Mission team was in Huff Creek, WV from July 9-17, 2016 to participate in the Appalachian Service Project (ASP). The team was lead by Father Luke Mihaly of Holy Trinity in Danbury, CT along with 9 other adult leaders. The team consisted of 24 teenagers from the parishes of Holy Trinity Danbury, CT, St. John's Mill Hill Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, Holy Trinity Yonkers, NY, St. John's Stratford, CT, St. Alexis, Clinton, CT, St. Barbara Orange, CT and St. John's, Perth Amboy, NJ. We worked on 5 homes doing a variety of exterior and interior work including painting, flooring, drywall, building stairs and deck, porch repair, siding, deck handrails, and trim work. In addition to the construction work, the team participated in many social,

cultural, and devotional activities with three other church groups at the center. After a long week of hard work, the team was rewarded with a visit to Hershey Park. We were blessed to be able to bookend our trip with visits to two other parishes. On the way down we attended Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Antiochian Church in Beckley, WV and on the way home we joined Fr. Jeff Zais and his parish, St. Michael's in St. Clair, PA. Both parishes were most gracious in their hospitality. If you are interested in joining the Orthodox Youth Mission Team, creating your own team, or have any questions, please come to one of our Thank You events, or contact us at www.oymt.info.

Reflections

George Antonellis - Initially, I did not want to go to ASP. Because it was my first time going I thought it was going to be a lot of work and I wasn't going to have fun. However, on the trip, I made friends with a lot of people and had a lot of fun. Even though the only person from our family that I saw a lot was Rocky (their dog), I found the trip to be a very humbling and fulfilling experience.

Paul DeBassio - This was my third year as a volunteer for the Appalachian Service Project, and, as always, it was truly a memorable experience. This year, myself, alongside 33 other volunteers, dedicated nine full days of our summer to travel down to Huff Creek, West Virginia and perform to the best of our abilities to make houses warmer, safer, and drier for a select few families. I had the privilege to work on a house owned by a very loving pair named Larry and Rachel. Over the course of the five days we were working on structural components of the house, I managed to set some time aside to speak to Larry and hear his story. After being involved in a tragic automobile accident many years ago, he went through many years filled with hospital visits and intensive physical therapy in order for him to fully regain his ability to walk. I expressed to him that my younger brother, Peter, went through a similar process over the course of the past eight years, and it really gave me a chance to connect to Larry and truly understand the significance of the pain that both he and my brother had gone through. Though the mission of ASP is to make homes "Warmer, Safer, and Drier", I firmly believe that it's our duty to not only provide a structural support for the homes, but to provide a structural support for the hearts of the families involved as well. By taking a few minutes out of the work day to sit down and

talk to the homeowners really gives us as volunteers an opportunity to have our eyes opened to the reality of the trials and tribulations that these wonderful people go through. The Appalachian Service Project, the staff involved, and the families we met will always have a special place in my heart as I live out my life, and that is something I truly won't let go of.

Michael Delcher - This is my second year on ASP. This year was very different from last year, whether it was the difference in how much the family interacted with us during the day, or the different stages of the project that we left at. But what hasn't changed is the appreciation of the families and the great feeling I got leaving, knowing that we changed their lives, and that we helped to make their houses a better place to live.

Lauren Fazekas - This was my first year on ASP, and I wasn't really sure if I was going to enjoy it, but I went in hoping for the best. It turned out to be an amazing week! I have so many new friends, made memories that I will remember forever, and was able to help someone in need. Our homeowner was very open with us and shared many stories about his past. We were able to build a really great relationship with him in such a short period of time. Not only did we get to bond with him, we were able to make a difference in his life, which was something that I really enjoyed being able to do. Overall, this week has been an amazing experience and I can't wait to come back next year.

Reflections

Nick Fazekas - This was my fifth year on ASP and the inherent hospitality, admiration, and genuine faith and testimony are unparalleled. For these people reside in the most impoverished and economically repressed region of the country in homes that are deteriorating away, continually exposed to the drastic and detrimental elements. Yet they are unconditionally reserved and inviting, as a group of complete strangers from every extent of the country come into their homes. Every year I come to realize though that what we take away is far more than we could ever reciprocate. In the memories, and lessons that will last a lifetime, the friends I have come to call my best friends. ASP is an adventure that doesn't come to conclusion at the end of the week, rather it continually evolves and circulates throughout the year. To make homes warmer, safer and drier, and connections that will last a lifetime.

Will Fazekas - This was my third year on ASP and it still amazes me how no matter how many years you've been on the trip, you can never really predict what your week will be like. You never know what your family will be like or what problems you'll face throughout the week, but at the end of the day, I know that I was meant to go on this trip and meet the most amazing, best people. And the memories you make last a lifetime. From getting my nails painted by the cutest little girl, to spending every day with the most friendly, loving dog named Rocky, to meeting people who I'm so fortunate to be able to call my best friends. This trip really does change your life in one way or another, and truly opens your eyes to what's important and not in your life. And it's amazing how so much love and adventure can go into one week, and what you get out of it is something that you'll never forget.

Alena Kittleman - This year, I was blessed with one of the most amazing families I've ever met. Last year I didn't really connect with my homeowner and that upset me. But my family this year had two of the cutest and sweetest girls, who never wanted to leave our side. My crew was amazing and we all put so much time and effort into accomplishing what needed to be done. We were able to build a deck, put laminate flooring down in one of the bedrooms, and repaint another bedroom. I formed new relationships with not only people from our group, but the other groups as well. Overall I couldn't have been blessed with a better week.



St. Michael's in St. Clair, PA

Reflections

Lexi Klimaszewski - This was my third year with ASP. These trips usually “center” me, but they can also be a bit difficult to get prepared for. You go into a week with ASP knowing it will be emotionally, spiritually, and physically challenging, but it will always be truly amazing and completely worthwhile. Before leaving for the trip this year, I was in kind of a weird place. We all have times where we feel distant from God and the people around us. We ponder what we’re doing here and why we’re doing the things that we’re doing. Sometimes I even question my religious beliefs. To be honest, my heart just wasn’t in it at the beginning of this week. However, my God Moments usually come in the form of connections with other people, and this year was no different. On Tuesday, we had the opportunity to hear Kelly speak, a local young woman with an incredible voice who was once what they call an “ASP Kid.” Hearing how much ASP affected her life, and seeing how incredibly positive and faithful she is despite the struggles she has faced, really struck me. On Thursday, I also had the chance to finally meet my homeowner, Carolyn, who isn’t usually home because she is traveling back and forth 2 hours for chemo treatments. This woman has overcome so much in her life, from raising her own two children alone and singlehandedly remodeling her home to make it safer for them, practically raising the son of her younger sister who died from bulimia when he was 7, caring for her mother alone as she suffered through Alzheimer’s, and now beginning her own battle with colon cancer. Despite all of this, she remains so incredibly faithful to God and his plans for her. Even though I only met Carolyn for one day, she was the best ASP homeowner I’ve ever had the privilege to meet and help. It is meeting people who have so much less than you that really puts things into perspective.

For some crazy reason, I was chosen to be born into such an incredible life with so much and so many people who love me. I am so grateful and so full of love for God. ASP is what allows you to spend your life sharing it with as many people as you can.

Natalie Klimaszewski - This ASP trip, my second one, enabled me to make a connection with the homeowners. In particular, the two boys, aged 10 and 11, became comfortable enough to play, laugh, and joke with us. It always shocks me the poverty some people endure, and yet again, I am humbled to think of the impact I might have made. In some small way, I bettered the lives of the boys, and brightened their futures, in just 5 short days. This overpowering feeling of compassion and being part of something bigger is something we all crave and only ASP can provide. With that said, I look forward to next year’s trip, and encourage anyone that can, to go on the trip or donate. They truly are the best weeks of my life, so thanks.



Reflections

Matthew Kuziak - This was my third year on asp. Every year has been a great experience. This year especially because I had a lot of good friends coming into the trip this year, and I was able to make a lot more not only within OYMT, but also in other groups at our center. It seemed like this year I did less work than my previous years due to weather and the distance of the home we worked on, but the relationships I built with the family was stronger than my previous families. The two little boys Mason and Michael were very funny and all around great kids. I'm glad I got to bond with them the last couple of days on ASP. Honestly, I'm more about the relationships on ASP than I am about the construction work. The relationships are why I keep coming back each year, and the good feeling I get from helping people is just a bonus.

Ted Maniatis -- When I first said I was going to do ASP, I was joking around with my friends and family. However, as time went on, the first meeting arrived, and from the first meeting to the last meeting, I really did not socialize and talk with any of the other kids. But finally the day of the trip came and all of that changed. It was no longer just a joke; I was going to West Virginia. While I was there during the week, it was nothing like I could have imagined. The second I stepped out of the van, I knew it was going to be a good week. The whole week I was making new friends, working hard, and just meeting great people. ASP helped get me out of my shell and gave me the best week I could have so far this summer.

Derek McKane - This was my third year on ASP. This year was really the first year I connected with the family. And it was amazing. My house that we worked on had 2 little girls named Maddie (8) and Kenzie (3). From Day 1 they were full of energy, happy, and always wanting to play. Talking about

playing, on Wednesday during lunch, Kenzie came out of the house with a bag of nail polish and asked me if I wanted my nails done, to which I said, "Yes," and she proceeded to paint my nails pink. I couldn't have a better family. This year will definitely be remembered.

Ana Radcliff - This is my second year here at ASP, however, it was the first year where I was able to really connect with the family. It was an amazing experience to get to the work site and be greeted by Maddie and Kenzie. They always made our day positive. My work crew spent our week building a whole new porch for the family. By the end of the week we completed so much for the family, it was absolutely outstanding. Even though we worked hard, and drenched our clothes with sweat, we bonded with the family like no tomorrow. On the last day, it was so sad to leave them. They left a lasting impression that will remain for a lifetime. I plan on coming next year to keep this amazing experience going.



Reflections

Grace Radcliff - Only being a first year to ASP, I thought that ASP would just be about working on a strangers' house and only that. Also with being my first year, I was always quiet during the meetings. The time I did speak was to say Hi or Bye to everyone, even if I didn't know anyone. This went on for a bit but in the end I made a good group of friends once the trip was near. When we got to the center, I was really excited to get to work, and during the week I began to realize that ASP was also making a connection with the family we would be seeing for a week. My family was just the best, so sweet, kind, just a marvelous family. Now with the trip over, I notice I will be missing the family I made a connection with during this week. I plan/hope to go next year to ASP! 😊

Madeline Sulich - This was my fifth year on ASP and this year was much different than the others. We met our homeowner for the first and last time on Thursday. She commuted 2 hours to the cancer center for 15 minutes of chemo treatment and was only able to see us once. But in those few hours we heard her life story and she became even more amazing. Between raising her two kids alone and completely gutting and redoing her home, it was not hard too. It is said that some people get dealt a harsh hand in life, but after losing her sister to an eating disorder and then taking in her mother who had Alzheimer's, only to be diagnosed with cancer herself, it is hard to keep your faith. Yet this woman had the strongest belief in God that I have ever seen and never complained or questioned his plan once. I have never seen a faith so strong in one person and I'm not sure I will ever find someone who is more deserving (of ASP help) than this woman.

Joe Symochko - This was my third year at ASP, and I've noticed from this week that each time I've gone has been a new experience for me. Though each year we've gone down to Appalachia to essentially do the same task, rebuild and repair homes, the people you help, and the people around you are what make each year unique and special. You build relationships with people you've known but never really talked to or bonded with, and of course also with complete strangers. For example, this year I was paired in a crew with people I've known for a while, but never really talked to. Now I think I can say I have become much closer to them and our friendships have grown. However, my fellow volunteers aren't the only ones I connected with, but my homeowner as well. Caroline, who was diagnosed with cancer, is currently going through chemo treatments and was unable to be at the house while we were there. Until one day, when her appointment was scheduled later, she visited us at the site. Although I only listened to her for an hour, I practically learned her life's story and knew her better than people I see on a day to day basis. She was so open to us, even though we were the first crew to work on her home, and she exemplified a strong trust in God, despite all the hardships she's been through. It helped me realize that bad things happen to everyone, and although you may think your life is unfair, someone out there is worse off than you, and you must remember to never lose hope and your faith.

Nick Symochko - This was my fifth year at ASP. I'm really grateful to have traveled down with my friends from CT, New Jersey, and Yonkers, NY, and also with my younger brother, to Huff Creek West Virginia to do the work of the Lord. I am thankful for a great

Reflections

crew that I worked with and also for a great homeowner, Larry. What I liked about my crew this week was if the project was hard to do or to finish we never gave up. What I liked about Larry was that he liked to talk and had a great sense of humor and was a nice man too. One night as we all went out for ice cream, Larry made a surprise appearance. I was surprised to see him on the last day of work his wife came to the house to say goodbye. They were so grateful to see what we did to keep to them warmer, safer and drier. I really enjoyed working on Larry's and Rachel's house and had a great week.

Adriana Szpynda - For one week out of the year I get to completely immerse myself in faith, hard work, and amazing people. The friends we drive down with are selfless and kind, with amazing senses of humor and empathy. The people we meet in Appalachia are so humble and self-sufficient and strong. I get to learn and grow from both groups of people, and all the work doesn't seem so hard anymore. My homeowner's trailer was crumbling with rotten wood, yet before we did any work, the words "God bless you" came out of her mouth. Her two grandsons have slept on couches their entire lives, but when ASP came to build them a bedroom and fix their house, they said, "Why? What do we need to fix?" These people have welcomed us into their homes in order for us to try to help, and I feel honored and humbled. Every teen who goes on ASP realizes that it's less about what we give to the people of Appalachia and more about what we get from them, and I think that's a really great thing.

Emily Szpynda - This being my third year in ASP, I was well aware as to what was in store and already super excited for the trip about a month before we left. So by the time we

arrived in Danbury at 7:30 in the morning on Saturday, I was prepped and ready for one of the best weeks of my summer. And of course ASP didn't disappoint. My crew was amazing. We worked hard under our awesome leaders while still having fun with the project. I learned 7 new cards games at the center because there was absolutely no (cell) service anywhere near the center and the fantastic staff helped to make the center the best it could be. My favorite part of the trip though was my homeowner Larry. I connected with him more than I have with any of my past families. We talked about little things and big things in our lives and I felt connected with him even after one day of knowing him. On Wednesday that week I was feeling a bit under the weather and almost as if he'd known me forever Larry picked up on it and asked me how I was, saying I was lacking the usual "pep in my step." I know that a big part of ASP is making an impact on our homeowners' lives both physically with their homes and spiritually. But this year I was the one impacted and inspired to keep these trips in my life for as long as I can.

Vika Szpynda - This is my first year on ASP and I absolutely love it. I didn't actually realize how much our family appreciated what we were doing until the last day. We had given our gift to Samantha, Keith, Kenzie, Maddie and Preston (the homeowners), and when I picked up Kenzie to say goodbye, she pointed out that Samantha's eyes were tearing up. Kenzie is 3, by the way. When I turned around, Samantha was crying. That's when I realized what we had done, and how much they appreciated that we did extra projects and still managed to get really close to the family. I would love to see this family again, and I would love to come back to ASP next year.

Reflections

Melissa Tartaglio - This year I felt very connected with my family. The homeowner was sweet and I enjoyed getting to know him. I feel as though this experience would not have been the same if it wasn't for the connections made throughout the week. Not only was the week fulfilling with connections, but it was also full of good work. This year was definitely the most strenuous week I have ever done. I am so happy, though, to know that I helped to make someone's house safer, drier and warmer.



Culture Night

A.J. Tomaszek - My family was not open, same as last year. I was wanting that connection with the homeowners as everyone was or has experienced. However, my crew was fun. We had some good laughs and got some work done. On our job, we insulated and fixed previous mistakes. But like I said, I have been missing out on the connection with the homeowner and their kids. We spent half a day at Chicken Little and the 2 little girls put smiles on all of my crewmates' faces. Overall, I know the family's houses we are working on are shy and will appreciate it in the long run. ASP has been another great year.

Robbie Wagner - This was my first year of ASP. I went in expecting to just hang out with my group of friends, and to not create much of a relationship with my family/homeowner that I would be helping all week long. However, being split up into different work crews without my friends actually helped me. Instead of only talking to my friends that I had before the trip, this trip made me talk to many strangers that would become my friends later in the week. On top of that, I got to meet my family, which I was also able to create a good relationship with. Overall, this trip helped the poor in West Virginia, but also helped me spiritually and socially.

Olivia Wislocki - This was my first year at ASP and I wasn't really sure what I was expecting coming into it. I knew I would be doing construction work and that there would be religious aspects as well. However, I didn't realize that the work that we would be doing would have such a great impact on the homeowners' lives. Even though it didn't seem like we did that much work during the five days of construction, it really was a lot and it meant so much to the family. Also, since there was no phone service, I was able to bond with a lot of new people that I barely knew. It made me realize that I don't really need a lot of things in my life to be happy, I just need to be surrounded by a lot of good people. It helped me learn how to make the best of situations that I would normally not want to be in. ASP truly had a very positive impact on me.

BIG News for 2017! OYMT is going on an Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) mission trip to ALASKA!



The team was rewarded with an evening at Hershey Park

Tentative Date for
Orthodox Youth Mission Trip with OCMC to
Alaska is July 7-17, 2017

If you are a teen or adult interested in joining us,
please attend one of our presentations, or contact us by 10/30/16:

Fr. Luke Mihaly padreluke@aol.com

Susan Sulich ssulich@yahoo.com

For more information about our team, visit www.oymt.info,
and for the OCMC organization, visit www.ocmc.org.

Thank you again for supporting us, and we hope
you will invest in our success again next year.