

Dickinson College

Alabama Spring Break Service Trip 2013



For over ten years, hundreds of Dickinson students have dedicated their well-earned breaks to service through participation in Dickinson service trips. These trips have brought teams of students, faculty, and staff together to serve various communities across the country, and this year was no different. A team of 15 Dickinsonians travelled over 1000 miles to serve with Upper Sand Mountain Parish in the Northern Alabama area. The Upper Sand Mountain community is one that has faced many hardships including poverty, drug addiction, and natural disasters. Despite these hardships, members of this community have come together in extraordinary ways to rebuild after the April 2011 tornadoes and bring wealth back into the Upper Sand Mountain area. Throughout the week, our team was welcomed into this community with open arms as they worked to provide assistance to those who needed it most.

From March 8th-16th, these 15 Dickinsonians defied the stereotypes of the typical college student and the typical "spring break." Instead of warm tropical beaches, they chose the cold, frigid, temperatures of Northern Alabama. Instead of hotels and lavish apartments, they chose hardwood floors and sleeping bags. Instead of fancy meals and parties, they chose simple dinners, and games of "mafia", "catch phrase," and "psychiatrist." Instead of thinking of themselves, they thought of others.

Through their work, the team impacted hundreds of people as they planted rows of cabbage, repaired roofs, built a wheelchair ramp out of recycled wood, and worked at a food pantry. Close friendships were formed among team members, as well as neighbors and community partners. Although all who participated began this trip as strangers, they ended it as family, and unknowingly, became part of something greater than themselves. Their passion for service was greatly appreciated and noticed more than they realized. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." Read on to learn how the deafening actions of our students in just one week changed their own perspectives, opened eyes, and brought hope to those in need.

Friday, March 8th, 2013 – Jasmine Britton '12

So, yesterday we left for the Alabama trip. I can't believe how fast everything happened. It seems like just the other day we were interviewing everyone and now we are on the road! I'm super excited for what is to come and can't wait for the memories to begin. I hope that while on this service trip I will get to know everyone on a closer level and build new friendships. I also hope to gain stronger leadership skills that will allow me to communicate clearly and effectively. Going on this trip means a lot to me and I hope that I can be of service to everyone and anyone who needs it. I look forward to writing more, but until then I will leave you with these questions: who do you serve? How do you serve? Why do you serve? Each service trip I ask myself these questions, & each time I learn something new about myself.

Friday, March 8th, 2013 – Emily Snell '15

Yesterday marked Day 1 of the Alabama service trip 2013. We packed the vans and were on the road in no time. With the music blasting, we set off from Carlisle and made our way to Virginia. After a small mix-up finding the hotel, we checked in and settled in for our first night as a group. I am so excited for this upcoming week and I love the time we have all spent together this much already. I cannot wait for the next seven days! It will be so neat to see how we grow as a group in the coming week and I'm looking forward to learning more about the service we'll be doing... Alabama tomorrow!!!

Friday, March 8th, 2013 – Jordan Peters '14

As I walked to the ATS parking lot, I was full of apprehension. Would this trip be fun? Would I get along with everyone? Would Alan teach me the ancient art of Kung-fu? I walked up to the 3 parked vans, determined to make a good impression. "Hey everyone!" I practically shouted, grinning ear to ear. I was met with blank stares and looks of disgust. It was a tough crowd. We loaded up the vans, and Alan told me I'd be one of the first to drive. My co-pilot would be Frieda, who was off getting food or something. Finally we loaded the vans. I thought, "Time to turn on the GPS". Frieda looked at it, perplexed. I took it and tried to type in the address, but the GPS promptly froze. "Expletive it," I declared, "we'll do it live." We drifted out of the parking lot, burning rubber the whole way. I requested some "bumping" tunes, to which I received the "drop it like it's hot" Pandora station. Now we were talking. We merged onto the highway, causing several accidents and an explosion or two. I thought of the 4 hours I'd slept the night before, and hoped I would stay awake. On we drove. The shifts were two hours and I was getting pretty tired of staring at the back of a Dickinson College Ford Caravan. The walkie-talkie chirped to life. "MAKE IT RAIN, EXPLETIVE," thundered Eddy, adding some humor to the trek. It was 7pm!!! My turn driving was over! But...why weren't we pulling over? We decided to call someone in the first van, "We'll keep going till 7:30, the lead group declared." "Mother of God," I thought to myself, these people are insane. We drove on. Finally, we pulled over. I stepped out of the car, fighting my urge to both kiss the ground. We switched drivers, and I switched cars, ate a few gummy worms, and enjoyed the ride. We got to the hotel, thought it was the wrong hotel, and drove off for a while before returning to the hotel. We got

our room, and the TV was already on. It was creepy. We did nose-goes to determine who had to share a bed. Alan and I lost. We looked forward to our next day on the road.

Saturday, March 9th, 2013 – Mu Mu ‘15

On our way to Alabama we saw a lot of fascinating things. I cannot remember how many times we came across churches and barns. It was interesting and I enjoyed the ride there. We were truly in the south. I cannot forget about the cows and cattle.

Saturday, March 9th, 2013 – Eddy Diamantis ‘16

Okay, so our trip to Alabama was real fun. We got real ratchet on our first car ride. Playing insane rap and Alex kept kicking my seat, pissing me off! Next thing I know we were in Tennessee, getting lost, looking for parking because it was so big! They have so much space and apparel. It makes Dickinson look like a playground. After eating some pretty good noodles & seeing Colleen open a bottle with her teeth, we soon went to Alabama. Now things got interesting! My dream of being in the South finally came true! It was so country-like, with so many things spread out! After getting settled in a wonderful area, we went to eat! When I asked the waitress if I could have some seltzer, she looked at me for a while with a puzzled look. “That’s it?!” “Yes...” I said “And you don’t want any sugar or lemon in that?!” I can see my request was unusual for the South! Then, before we left, Emma told me to wait for her because she would use the bathroom. Ok, no problem, so we go out to the car, find our song and left. But as we were driving, one of the cars left. I wondered why. Then Alan called and asked “is Emma with you?” I thought so & called her name, but there was no answer, “Holy crap!” We had left Emma! I had never felt so bad. Finally we got her, shopped and lived as one happy Family ☺

Saturday, March 9th, 2013 – Kristen Carmen ‘14

Today we woke up bright and early after a good night’s sleep, had a quick breakfast at our hotel, and set off. I had the second driving shift which meant a little rest before taking the driver’s seat. We were headed toward the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, somewhere I had never been and was excited to see. Driving went pretty smoothly besides a couple quick lane changes due to spotty GPS directions.

Eventually we made it there and I – along with everyone else, I think – was surprised at the massive size of the campus. It was like its own town! We stepped out of our vans to the most beautiful day. The sun was brilliant and it was quite warm. We felt humbled by the giant buildings – historic brick libraries and dorms like hotels – and kept comparing the campus to Dickinson. We found our way to the campus bookstore where we were immersed in a sea of orange apparel. Combing the clearance racks, I eventually found a t-shirt for \$1, an excellent purchase.

We had a great lunch outside in the sun and watched big groups of cowboy boots and sun dress-clad girls pass. It was quite obvious this culture was one filled with Southern belles. After some group pictures out on the "Hill" on campus, our group headed back to the vans to finish our journey. Our arrival in Upper Sand Mountain is highly anticipated!

Sunday, March 10th, 2013 – Colleen Berger '13

It's been an awesome couple of days so far. The group is fun, easy-going, and already loves to tease each other, which is amazing to see since we haven't been around each other or known each other for very long. We had an awesome day outside, it was absolutely gorgeous out. I took a stroll up the road from the church we are staying at around 8AM and Pavan and Eddy joined me shortly after. It was beautiful and peaceful. It was also great talking to Pavan and Eddy. Our discussion and the beautiful morning were an amazing, relaxing way to start the morning and a great way to get into the mood for Alabama and this service trip. It's important to have that time to just step away and realize that I'm away from the craziness and stress of Dickinson. You can really put yourself in the moment and realize that this week is about yourself, the other people on the trip and about the people and the community you're serving. I needed that time this morning to really get myself back into the mindset.

The rest of the day we spent outside for the most part, at De Soto State park. Despite the numerous U-turns and wrong directions we took, everyone laughed and joked. No one minded that we spent forever finding the park or Sonic on the way back. It just becomes the joke of the day. We spent the evening around the campfire after dinner. Everyone was singing camp songs and at least attempting to freestyle though that was a bit of a struggle at times. But it seemed like for the most part we just laughed. That's something I love about this group is the laughs. Everyone has their own unique laugh, and we all laugh so easily. It makes for a great atmosphere and group dynamic.

Sunday, March 10th, 2013 – Alex Fernandez '15

I was surprised that I didn't struggle to wake up today. Jasmine's team set up breakfast. Unfortunately, we found out that we wouldn't go to the worship at the Church, but it just meant that we could go to De Soto National Park for longer and earlier. It took us a really long time to get there, but after about 20 U-turns, we made it. We ate lunch and some of us threw around a football while others tossed a Frisbee. We decided to name the football using the entire alphabet so when someone dropped it, we named it a new name according to whatever letter was next. Afterwards, we went on a long, fun hike on which we saw a waterfall and snake. After the hike, we all got über excited to go eat at Sonic. Yet again, due to some ill-directed drivers, it took us about 1.5 hours to get to Sonic, but we did and we enjoyed the food.

We came back to the parish, some of us relaxed, others threw a football/volleyball/baseball outside. Alan's crew prepared dinner, and we enjoyed some great Chinese food. Then we had delicious s'mores outside which was fun and sang songs and free-styled. Reflection was calming and relaxing, especially

since only candles lit the room. Today was full of laughter, good food, and exercise. This group is really great and I am looking forward to building something/impacting someone's life positively as a group.

Sunday, March 10th, 2013- Kerry Richmond '16

Today I woke up with a good feeling. My sleeping bag/mattress combo was surprisingly comfortable and I slept really well all night. After breakfast (Frosted Flakes!) We started our adventure to De Soto State Park. I was a little disappointed that we were missing the church service, but I have always loved hiking (fare trekking in Italiano! Just learned that last week), so that's exciting. So far most of the time we have spent on this trip has been in the car and it is surprisingly so much fun. We sing along to good music, enjoy comfortable silences, and even though we are constantly lost, everyone stays in high spirits. It's nice to know we are so self-reliant. This is one of those times that really remind me that I'm an adult now. Scary! So, many U-turns later, we got to the park and ate lunch. Frieda and I unleashed our inner child on the playground and I managed to not hit anyone with the Frisbee. On our actual hike, we really got to know the land we're on, as well as the people we are with. I revived some old Girl Scout songs (the Nut song, Herman the worm, fleafly flow) and surprise, got lost. Once again, we also got lost on our way back but we finally found a Sonic (My favorite restaurant) so it was worth it. Later, after a wonderful dinner, we made a campfire and made s'mores. We all sat around, telling stories, singing songs, being silly while setting marshmallows on fire. Now we are lying around, and I smell like campfire so all is happy. I haven't been this blissfully content in a very long time. I'm already so glad I decided to go on this trip. It is the perfect break from the stress of school.

Service starts tomorrow, so wish us luck?

Monday, March 11th, 2013 - Sam Moyer '15

The fact I messed up the day is actually a great feeling because I think it reflects that my experience so far in Alabama has been truly immersive - I'm not worrying about school work or deadlines, and even though we are very busy here, it has been a great chance to focus on getting to know the people on the trip and the people in the community.

We started our first day of work at the Parish today. It was raining, so instead of starting one of our outdoor projects for the week, we helped out in the warehouse sorting medicines and helping to organize. Even though everyone was looking forward to being outside, I felt that the tasks we did were really important to the community and it really allowed us a chance to bond as a group and meet some of the people of the parish. I think everyone enjoyed working with Joey, who was very funny and enthusiastic about having our help. We also got to see how caring the people here are. Mu, Pavan, and I were asked to help carry in over 200 cans of food, all donated by one man to benefit the members of the community I was even more amazed when I learned that this man made large donations often. The generosity of those who we have met so far has been astounding and inspiring. I am looking forward to

starting new projects and meeting other volunteers throughout the week. Even after one day. I can tell that this trip is going to be a great experience!

Tuesday, March 12th, 2013 – Frieda Adu-Brempong '16

Hours on end,
To reach an anticipated nowhere
Where city stress can't touch
Warmth of sun
Politeness of stars
Did I tell you about the time Dixie stole my heart?
It was the weekend of March 8th
Post a week of putting ink to paper
Trying to make mentions of 89 & above
It was a long weekend...
Until my eyes became fixed
Oh beautiful sunset
Blue, Pink, and Orange
Like University of Tennessee
Pit stops at gas stations
Like in the movies
Or when dirt road net cow
Met horse
Or trespassing college students
Met baking dogs
I mean loving puppies
Hush puppies
Met belly...
Alabama knew the detour to my heart
Was through my stomach
And so she cater to me
Rubbed my back like morning hike
And foot rubbed laughter
She reminded me of playground
And ball-toss
Rock climbing
Childhood shenanigans
She gave gifts like people
Except I lost the receipt for some!
She reminded me that there is so much more in this world
To be seen, to know

And while I can't reach it at once
She's willing to host me
For the time being
I only hope that our love isn't temporary
Cause 'Bama keeps running circles through my mind, literally!
How many U-turns does a college student need to make to realize that
It's never been about the destination,
But the journey
And surely my dearest,
Alabama
You are worth the trip.

Tuesday, March 12th, 2013 – Emma Sander '15

I have been procrastinating writing in this Journal because I feel our trip was so life changing that it can't be expressed in words. Right now I'm in the car driving back and I can't believe that all this happened; it almost seems like a dream. There are so many things that I have learned, most importantly, I learned not to make judgments of people before meeting them because you are only hurting yourself by doing that. Secondly, I learned how lucky I am to go to a wonderful school, and have people that support me on a daily basis. I also am so grateful that I received this amazing opportunity to go on this trip. It is an experience that I will remember for the rest of my life.

Tuesday, March 12th, 2013 – Alan Yao '15

So many things have happened to us within these two days. We have grown so much as a family together. We cry together to share our feelings and learn that we all share a heart with each other. For me personally, something deep down has been touched. I learned that we all have a lens in our eyes and need to take it off for other people. We need to give others love. I learned that there is something else important in our lives other than just working hard and achieving one good thing after another. I found another part of myself, which is lost but grows now and thrives.

On the roof: I really enjoy looking at our team enjoying the time with each other. We all supported Kerry to climb on the house. We worked as a team, 3 or 2, laughing, talking and enjoying each others company. Mu Mu also worked with VT people. After our work, 4 of us came to the other side and had an interesting conversation with people who are from a different background compared to our Dickinson experience. They are really interesting and are willing to share their stories in VT with us. Then, we climbed down and supported Kerry to overcome her fear of heights. This was a really moving moment. Everyone was supporting Kerry to climb down to the stair. Finally, she overcame her fear and did it!

Reflection: Reflection is definitely the best moment for all of us. We gradually see what has happened to us today and realize what is important for us. Why did we come on this service trip? We're so

generously sharing our feelings with each other. We learn that we're all here together with each other. Today seems like there are a lot of difficulties for us, with VT, with the fear of heights and with our own struggle in our hearts. However, I'm real happy this all happened. Without those difficulties, we would not have grown so close with each other.

With Joy: I had a conversation with Joy about his life. His mom has 3 kids but has to take care of another 4 kids in his family. Altogether, there are almost 10 children with a single mom without even a job. He also mentioned that his mom has cancer. We asked how she is able to feed so many children. "With places like this," Joy said. Joy is just 21 years old, 2 months younger than me. He has been through so many things in his life. Life is really unfair for him. However, he is still trying hard for life, still pushing himself. This makes me feel that I'm much more immature. Now, I totally understand where his playful mode and sometimes "sarcastic" words come from. "Life is just so hard for him."

Enjoy: Having talked so much about heavy things. I'm really enjoying my time with our group. We laugh, joke, play games. We share our feelings, we work together, we are making a difference. We are bonding with each other as a team. We will keep this together, now and in the future! We're all here together. We're the best!!!

Wednesday, March 13th, 2013- Alex Fernandez '15

Today was such a positive day. I was cold, I felt sick, I felt tired, but my day was not tarnished by any of those things. After last night's reflection, I did a lot of self-reflection and have changed my attitude about my trip. I feel more open-minded about everything and everyone I meet and judge. I am trying to be less judgmental and close-minded with everything I do and everyone I meet. Today we took nails out of pieces of wood and then used the wood we had to build a wheel chair ramp for a homeowner. We didn't get to talk to him, but spent all day putting the ramp together. Drilling, measuring, sawing, literally everything we did today was just fun and there wasn't a point in the day where I thought to myself "I just want to rest or go back home". It was sad to see some stray dogs seeking attention and to not talk to the homeowner, but I shut out the negatives today, which felt liberating and peaceful. We came back and some of us tried to go to the batting cages, but they were closed so we played a little baseball in the backyard on top of volleyball. Then we enjoyed a delicious dinner made by Alan's team. Reflection was a lot less intense than yesterday's, which was relaxing. After, we saw the video about the kid called pork chops. I love this video because it resonates with me as he was bullied like me in middle school. Then we played a new game called psychiatrist. That was how this great day ended, with a great show.

Wednesday, March 13th, 2013 – Emily Snell '15

I have been looking forward to writing in the journal all day! This week has been so incredible and I feel so lucky that I was given the opportunity to come to Alabama! I woke up this morning with a completely different attitude than on Monday and Tuesday. Reflection last night really brought the group together and so being able to work as a team this morning felt more cohesive. We tore nails out of boards and

were able to use our hands to see a project begin and most of the way completed. I loved being able to work with Ben and Joey, and Ben was very patient in teaching us all how to use the tools! Our lunch break was spent back at home where we all rushed through our sandwiches to fit in a game of mafia before getting back to work. After tons of laughs and lots of trail mix we drove back to the worksite and were able to put together most of a wheelchair ramp. Everyone found it rewarding to be able to see a physical result of our work. This trip has really been eye opening! I have noticed such a change in our group dynamic, but I think it is because we are all growing closer. Everybody was playing a game together after dinner that is called psychiatrist. Essentially, in each round one person (the psychiatrist) leaves the room while the others come up with a theme or trick for that round. Each player may have to respond to the psychiatrists questions using a movie title, or they could have to act as somebody else. Emma said that it was super difficult to figure out the 'diagnoses for the group. Each round made it a little easier to figure out the diagnosis as we played rounds in all different styles. Eventually, during the last round we had to each answer the psychiatrist's questions with a word that started with the same letter as our first names. Even though we finished playing twenty minutes ago, I have been starting my sentences with the letter E. Eventually I will start speaking (and writing) normally, but for now, I'm stuck in psychiatrist mode. Exactly three more days here sadly! Every day has been wonderful and I want spring break to last for at least as long as it takes me to stop writing with "e's." Embracing, every, emotional, experienced, enjoyed, everybody, emitted elation, euphoria, (et) enlightenment, even though I was able to use my psych major during 'psychiatrist,' I felt like I shouldn't leave out my French major so I have to use 'et' meaning and in my last sentence.

Thursday, March 14th, 2013 – Jasmine Britton '13

I can't believe we only have 1 more day in Alabama. Time is definitely moving fast. Since I last wrote in the journal, so much stuff has happened. I feel like I have learned so much since I've been here, about myself, my team members, and why I love doing service. I'm so glad I got this opportunity and appreciate everything that I have gained from this experience. I think what I appreciate most about this trip is everyone's honesty and commitment. This really showed during Tuesday's reflection. People opened up about their personalities, their weaknesses, and their lives in general. I even opened up about myself and exposed a vulnerable side of me that I usually wouldn't have around people that I don't know. But this trip I have felt comfortable enough in sharing about my life.

What I have learned while on this trip:

1. Giving people a second chance
2. Believing in myself
3. Believing in others
4. Trusting others
5. Being thankful for the small things in life
6. Value of friendship and laughter
7. Taking life one step at a time
8. Appreciating myself and my reason for being here on this earth

Thursday, March 14th, 2013- Eddy Diamantis '16

Today has been all around great day and was also the day I feel I have gotten the most done. We had to take against the rest of the destroyed house and move everything out of the way for other groups. This was probably the most rewarding and stress free part. Smashing up parts and realizing that our work makes others work easier is a really rewarding thing to know. After a day of hard work and progress, we listened to the best racket station and began to write my letter. After our delicious taco dinner, and our bonfire, I had a really meaningful talk with Nikki. It was surprising to find out many things about her that I didn't know before, making me feel more connected and interested with her. I am happy she joined as the trip is coming to an end. I continue to feel connected to this team and I want to hang out with them and get to know them more at Dickinson!

Thursday, March 14th, 2013 – Jordan Peters '14

Today was a rough start. I overslept my alarm by a bit, but luckily Eddy was there to shake me awake. I got a quick shower, and sat down to yet another Apple Jacks-less breakfast. Oh well. We drove out to the Parish, our daily routine. From there we met with Joey and went to the work site. It was a long morning, and I was tired and sore from the past few days, but luckily lunch didn't take long in coming. Mu and I worked together to finish on one side of the wall we'd been working on for a while. Finally some progress! We left the work site that day tired but satisfied. That night we played quite a few rounds of Mafia. I wanted to go to bed, but I loved the group way too much to leave. All in all, today was a lot of fun!

Friday, March 15th, 2013- Sam Moyer '15

Today was our last day in Alabama. We spent the morning taking a tour of the parish with Dilbert. It was amazing to see the extent of the work that such a small group of people is able to do. I was particularly impressed with the cannery and the huge volumes of food USMP produces through it. After that we moved outside, took some pictures with Joey and the group, and then went to work planting cabbages. It was really enjoyable and showed how well we work as a group. It was also great to be able to talk to a few more of the students from Virginia Tech as we were working. Alex, Emily, and I had a race through the field, which Alex won, and felt like running through snow. Pavan, Nicki, and I were also able to talk more with Dilbert about the work he does in the parish and he had amazing stories to share. He is a truly kind and inspiring man and I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with him this week. We shared our last lunch with Joey and gave our gifts to Dilbert, Tanya, and the parish. Tonya shared a story about her first mission trip, with the message that even the smallest actions can make a huge impact in someone's life. It was very moving and felt proud of the work I accomplished this week. For me, leaving was bitter sweet. It was an opportunity to look back on the amazing work we did this week, reflection how much had changed over the past few days and appreciate the great friends I now have as a result of the trip. At the same time, I was sad to be leaving the Parish, the beautiful state of Alabama,

and to realize our time living and working together was coming to a close. Although we will soon no longer be in such close proximity to one another, I truly enjoyed everyone on this trip and can't wait to continue our friendship on campus ☺. I want to thank everyone for making this such an amazing experience. I am so glad we got to share this together.

Love always, Sam

Friday, March 15th, 2013 – Kerry Richmond '16

Right now I'm sitting in a hotel in Knoxville, TN after our last day of service and hours of driving. It's overwhelming to think that tomorrow I will be back at Dickinson. Back to reality.

When I decided to come on this service trip, I wasn't prepared for the impact it would have on my life. I thought I would do some service, help some people, come home and go on with my life. I didn't expect to become real friends with anyone on the trip. I didn't expect anything but a way to pass my spring break that didn't involve me sleeping until 3 and watching Netflix.

I feel like the connections I have made on this trip are the purest I have found at Dickinson. Last night during reflection I was talking to Emily and Colleen about the loneliness I have felt at Dickinson, and the sheer force of their support and interest was amazing. It was genuinely the first time I have really felt accepted at college, and it made me really appreciate this trip and the people it has shaped. I overheard Dilbert, the head of the Parish, talking the other day about the work he does and he said, "as long as we are alive, we can work to change our situation. What happens in the past doesn't really matter. We can do something about it." That really stuck with me. Coming to a school where I knew no one has been a lot harder than I expected, and I feel like I have spent too much of my time mourning my past and feeling sorry for myself, while not doing anything to change it.

This is all really incoherent and random, and I can't lift my arms over my head because they are so sore from the work yesterday, but I guess I am trying to say that I haven't been this content, motivated, and inspired in a very long time. I am so grateful for the opportunity to go on this trip, as well as for the wonderful people around me who opened up, listened, and made me feel like I was important. Service is now an integral part of my life and myself. I can't picture existence without it.

Friday March 15th, 2013 – Kristen Carmen '14

Our last day in beautiful Alabama was the epitome of bittersweet. We sadly packed up our things from the tiny little church where we stayed, said our last goodbyes to our kitchen table where so many memories were made, and headed to the parish for our last day of work. It was a warm, sunny day, and we all took advantage of the great weather to wear shorts with our Service Trip t-shirts! We set right to work planting cabbage, which involved digging holes and planting the small plants—it certainly sounded

simple, but somehow the group managed to plant the rows crookedly. It wasn't a problem, however, and we had an amazing time working together planting. I personally got filthy because I was in the dirt often—either pushed over by a friend or stumbling over the intricate lines of cabbage. The work passed too quickly however, and soon we were taking our last photos and having our last reflection.

The car ride was a blast, of course, but it was sad realizing what we were leaving behind as we got further and further away. We finally arrived in Tennessee, exhausted, but headed straight out for dinner at a square in the center of town. The square was beautiful—full of people bustling about pretty shops—and we immediately set about finding a place big enough to hold a famished group of 15. Dinner was an amazing time; full of laughter, jokes, and maybe some tears, we cemented the bonds that we had formed during the week. We also celebrated Jasmine's birthday with some dessert! It was truly an incredible night to cap off an unbelievable week.

After dinner we got some ice cream and there we met another service trip group from Ohio. They were super friendly and it was nice to see another group like ours doing some good!

Saturday, March 16th, 2013 – Colleen Berger '13

We're driving back now and I can't believe the week is over already. It's flown by and I don't even know where to start. I've laughed more this week than I have in a long time, which is saying something since I love to laugh. This group is not only hilarious but also so reflective and so supportive if each other. No matter how many trips I go on, it never ceases to amaze me how we all bond together and get to know each other. We'll all remember the laughs, the music, mafia, cooking together, our bathroom crisis, sonic, cows, reflections and all the other moments we were together. I think we all had fears we overcame, from spiders, mice and ladders to opening up and letting your guard down. And now there is a something holding all of us together, our trust in and love for one another.

I've made some great friendships and couldn't have picked a better way to spend my week. I'm just sad that I'm graduating in May after meeting so many incredible people this year and especially on this trip. Even though I'm graduating, I hope that this team is still able to stay close and hang out with each other. I hope that they can keep the community and sense of trust they have together strong, and bond after I have left.

Saturday, March 16th, 2013 – Pavan Purswani

"People are like houses, they can look great on the outside, but once you go and look around on the inside it is really easy to tell when there has been damage done" Dilbert

So ultimately rather than writing 2 separate entries I have decided to author a bit of an essay. This trip has meant a great deal. The fellowship, joking, games and so much more will be memories that I keep

forever. I think the other reason that stood out to me is because of how challenging this year has been for so many of us! With me being no exception. But I guess that is the thing about people... nothing is a better medicine than another person's ear to listen or shoulder to cry on!

As an administrator on these trips nothing makes me happier than seeing students tearing down the invisible walls that are imposed between people. Whether it be within our group, our Alabama Parish friends and even our V tech friends by the end of our trip, it seemed that our group was pretty much finished with those walls! This is something that I hope that we all continue to try and bring into our lives. Finally find my completed rap on the opposite page!

Haze in my mind
Fears left behind
Log by log the fire stokes
But it's my soul that smokes...
It drifts and smolders into your lungs
No apologies though cause that stung
Trying to find me again and again
Keep on pushing for me to extend
The horizon is a goal and a limit
You know now so feddy sins it
Chapter 1 comes to an end
The message is sleep and I hit send
Mafia is cracking
Sledgehammer smacking
Lookout it's Alan with a hammer
I got scared, sorry for the stammer
So many stars
Prying crowbars
Cold causing shaker
In the upper sand mountain
Girl's toilet acting like a fountain
Service trip fun
Bout to get me some
No need to pass
No seeds my a\$\$
The path is clear
Nearly trampled by the steer
Story about to end
But glad to have a friend!

Saturday, March 16th, 2013 – Mu Mu ‘15

It's Saturday and our trip has come to an end. Although we spent a week together it felt like we've known each other for a while. This short week has truly been "magical" as Alan would say. We went from being complete strangers to close friends, who joined together for a good cause. I enjoyed the moments we spent together and the service we have done. It was tough leaving the place we stayed in because there were a lot of memories and memorable moments we developed and created during the trip. From Alan's mafia's rampage to Eddy's ratchet behavior, we won't forget any of that. What I am saying we'll still be close regardless if we go out to dinner together or just say hi around campus, because we are the RATCHET CREW after all. It was very touching to see how much the Parish has given to the surrounding community. Their actions go to show that there are caring hearts around the world and even in the most unexpected places. I hope they continue to succeed as an organization and that every family that receives their assistance really appreciates their help. I hope to return and see how the rebuilding process has flourished and hopefully by then everything might have improved for those families. Until then, deuces Alabama!! RATCHET CREW OUT!!