

Service Journals Kentucky

Evan Dubchansky '14

After an exciting night of Sardines, we arose early, repacked the vans, and made our way to Dragon's tooth. All morning, we hiked along a beautifully wooded area and exchanged thoughts, songs, family memories and stories about faith. It was a long hike, but attitudes remained positive and overall, we had a great time. After all, it's hard to dislike any combination of being outdoors and eating trail mix.

After the hike, we began our drive to Kentucky. We learned of each other's music tastes and watched as the scenery changed. Live stock farms dilapidated buildings and signs of humans' impact on the environment dotted the streets. When we arrived at Hindman, we met Ryan and explored our picturesque cabin. We were fortunate to have a delicious dinner prepared for us and while we ate, we had a chance to chat with Ryan. He has lived in Harlan his whole life and while he definitely is passionate about the area, he sees himself leaving soon in order to pursue career opportunities. Coming from Dickinson, we found it surprising to hear him say that only once groups started coming did he learn about the environment impacts of mining. When we returned to the house, Ryan led us in a themed version of take a stand and we all spoke passionately about our opinions.

We reflected on our day and the evening ended with some people reading, some playing banana grams, and others enduring an endless game of Uno. All in all, it was a fantastic day with my new friends.

Andrew DiNardo '16

I wish there was a word or phrase to sum up my experience thus far here in Hindman.

Today, we finished our respective projects and, for the most part, said goodbye to some new friends. We have also been the focus of a film some locals are putting together which makes me feel like being here is a big deal.

All of the group seemed happy with their projects. My own in particular required a lot of patience but resulted in a finished product that I was content with—just as Terry promised, there was a spoon in each block of wood.

I am very anxious and interested in what the latter half of the week will consist of. I feel like, so far, we have been given a "VIP" tour, which is in no ways a bad thing. I am excited to gain an inverted perspective and be able to see some of the things people here struggle controlling. I believe that the rest of the week will perfectly complement our beginning and expand our knowledge in a way we would have never expected.

Mackenzie Johnson '16

After being in Hindman for two days, I have learned a lot. Firstly, I made an actual knife. I was so appreciative to have the opportunity to do something for myself that I never would have done otherwise. Also I learned what a dulcimer is! When I am in school or working from home, I tend to get

more entrenched in what is going on for me personally. The beauty of the trip so far has been to raise my line of sight, taking my attention away from my perceived problems, refocusing it on new people and new communities.

I am immensely happy with the group dynamic. It is beautiful to watch this smattering of Dickinson students come together and blend in a setting of service, caring, and compassion.

In terms of the rest of the week, I am looking forward to meeting new people and learning new skills. One skill I'd like to work on is entering a situation and being able to determine what help is needed and desired. I know is difficult to acquire, but I'm looking forward to the opportunity.

Alyssa Young '14

Today was an epic day. The team finished 15 pieces of art (staffs, spoons, and knives). It's been fun to see the level of pride and attachment that the kids have to their small creations. After two days of pouring over my spoon, crafting it lovingly, and literally putting all of my energy into it until my arms ache and my body is drained, I've started to realize the beauty of artisanship. Terry makes his living by his hands. I almost cannot fashion a spoon out of a block of wood. Someone mentioned today that all of our lives our mental education has been nourished, but I would even take it as far as to say that our generation (as a whole) lacks practical skills. I have a lot of respect for Terry, his art, and his life philosophy.

I'm really happy with how the team has been bonding so far. Everyone in the group is friendly and open-minded, which makes for heartfelt, open, and educational conversations. I feel like I'm learning a lot from my fellow members.

I cannot wait to see what the rest of the week holds in store.

Cindy Baur '16

When I first walked into the bible study room I was definitely surprised. I've never been to a bible study before, and I had no idea what to expect. I sat across from Theresa and she was definitely at the top of the group as far as participation goes. She was prepared to excitedly answer each question. It seemed like she knew the entire bible from start to end. I was so surprised by the active participation and engagement in the room. I definitely the bible study experience is reflective of the tone of the week. Every person I have met has been friendlier and more welcoming than anyone I've met. I was on the Fritzwater work site today and when we were leaving. Fritz made it a point to personally thank and hug each one of us. Even though we had just met him, he trusted us to paint and contribute to a project that he's probably been working on for months. I'm looking forward to meeting new people from the community as we continue on throughout this week.

Xueyin Zha '16

I'm sitting in the middle of our evening reflection. Tonight I had the most incredible experience. When the majority of my precious teammates started weeping one by one, I was literally shocked and did not know what was happening.

What happened was that our reflection about the sermon Chad gave us involved strong emotional reactions. My teammates most of whom Christian from different denominations or people of different racial/sexual social views, were deeply offended by the sermon's exclusive, ultra-conservative, and biased tone. (I do not even know how to describe it properly).

This was the first time in life when I saw people crying for spiritual ideas. My teammates strong spirituality and sensitivity intrigued me and struck my admiration. On the one hand, I realized I need to become more sensitive towards spiritual ideas as part of my personal growth; on the other hand however, I also wish to maintain my emotional and spiritual neutrality and learn about religious people's mentality from an objective perspective.

However, putting my own reflection aside (which was peculiar because of my special background), I felt sad about my friends' feeling getting hurt, and I realized this is a low point, or rather the most challenging and dramatic moment, of our exciting journey.

Aaron Hock '15

What a tumultuous past two days. Anger, happiness, confusion, and disappointment have waged a constant tug of war in my mind. If God is forgiving why didn't he give Adam a second chance? How, in this open interfaith environment, have I ended up in a room full of people that hate me for being myself: gay? After experiencing a comfortable and accepting beginning to my week I had suddenly felt shameful and condescended to after one forty-five minute church service. My biggest fear about this trip had come true: I had to hide my identity. My clothing, my voice, and my posture were like rescue flares notifying the room of my location on the spectrum of sexuality. It was only rhetoric, but I felt like a dehumanized sinner. Talking to Chad this evening allowed me to put some context to the situation. I know his church is conservative and interprets the Bible literally. I respect difference of opinion and experience, and I am conscious of the historical and social context of religion in the South. That doesn't change the discomfort forced upon me last night. Personally, I am now able to appreciate the experience as a challenge I had to overcome and a chance to learn about my personal assumptions, religious beliefs, and ways of understanding opposing opinions. I will not soon forget the way that sermon affected me, but retrospectively I am glad to add this to my body of experiences.

Laura Hart '15

This is our last night. We just got t-shirts and stars and a cleaning list, which makes it even more real. I know we'll see each other at school—lunches, dinners, dance parties, hallway hugs, etc.—but I am going to miss our bumpin' car rides and hip tunes, our massage circles and midnight talks. Also, piggy back rides. We did so much today. Amazing pancakes for breakfast, visiting the coal mines down the way, discussing mountain top removal, picking up trash, writing our stories, talking a hike, meditating, smores—making, sharing our gratitude. So many memories that can fit in a mind but never in a suitcase.

Bag omelettes, sugared pancakes, partial puzzles, hidden socks. I love all of the trust and confidence we've shown in each other this week. I respect to the utmost how vulnerable you've made yourself around me, and all of the non-judgmental openness and compassion you've demonstrated in the face of my fears, insecurities, and vulnerabilities. We've developed deep this week, and I'm so pleased and honored to have shared it with you.

Cindy Baur '16

I have learned so much from this amazing group of people. It didn't matter if we were carving spoons, hiking, cooking, painting, or whatever. I laughed and learned while we served this community. One of the biggest lessons that I've learned on this trip is that people will always surprise me. I'm looking forward to returning to campus with 14 friends some of them new and some of them old.