

DICKINSON COLLEGE
SPRING BREAK SERVICE TRIP 2012
GREENWOOD, SC



TEAM JOURNAL

Over spring break, 13 students and 2 administrators travelled to Greenwood, South Carolina to volunteer through Habitat for Humanity. We were hosted by the Westminster Presbyterian Church, who exemplified southern hospitality. They treated us to dinners, left us baked goods after workdays, and always greeted us with smiles and encouragement. The Habitat employees—all gregarious, retired men from the Greenwood area—were equally hospitable. They patiently helped us add a roof, install electrical boxes, put in windows and doors, and place siding on most of the house. Sharron, the single mother of a college student and of a 10-year old boy struggling with autism, showed up frequently to offer help and encouragement. She and her children represented one of thousands of struggling families in the area. Greenwood is a small town (about 20,000 residents) that suffers from high unemployment and deep poverty. Five of its seven largest factories have shut down within the past 20 years, so many families are desperate to make ends meet. Experiencing Greenwood opened our eyes to the harsh realities of rural America in a time of globalization. Most of all, the people we met—both South Carolinians and Dickinsonians—taught us a lot about ourselves.

Sunday, March 11, 2012

Traveling to Greenwood, South Carolina was filled with yawns, laughs and lots of sing-a-longs. I was surprised by how easily our team connected. Age, sex and occupation became irrelevant. Due to our passion for service, we were all brought together. I engaged in conversations with students and faculty from all facets of campus made the 10 hour drive effortless. Hearing about each person's experience made me feel fortunate to be part in embarking on this journey. I am looking forward to what tomorrow/this week brings.

Jossie Munoz

We hit the road finally! South Carolina here we come. All motivated, all fun, all passionate to get rollin'. We are still working as the pilot and co-pilot schedule. Angel just keeps falling asleep. ☺ Virginia's landscape is really beautiful. It's really fun to get to know everyone when on the road. We have some real talented singers on the team. Starships is definitely the service trip theme song. So far we had a really nice hour. I really like the Rob's Pough attack through visiting the country side for the first time. Really excited. This is going to be a great week! Can't wait.

Norman Nemitz

Wow, finally in South Carolina! Tomorrow is the first day on the job, I can't wait! I'm sure we all can't wait—I hope it doesn't rain. The road trip here was filled with a lot of fun, at least what I could remember from it, ha. I'm excited to continue to learn more about the team and really commit with each other. Our group cooks for everyone tomorrow, let's see how that goes hah; anyway, this assassin game is killer (pun intended), and I don't know how I'll get my person. Let the games begin; CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

Angel Acosta

First day of work is over and I got severe arthritis and a crippling spinal condition to show for it. The worksite was certainly different from what I expected as they kind of just threw us in with the sharks.

They gave me a mechanized saw and essentially said "have fun." Josh and I took them up on that challenge. All in all it was a bit unreal to look at that shell of a house and realize that we had done that work. Twelve college students, two responsible adults, and one average German were able to adequately construct a house with no prior training. It really says a lot about our willingness to work and I'm sure if we had it our way, we'd finish this by the end of the week. I'd say I can't wait until tomorrow but there are currently still funfetti cupcakes on the tray so there's work left to be done tonight.

Sean

The first day of work is over and my fore arms feel like jello. I wish I had counted the number of nails I pounded today. Arriving at the worksite we found the foundation and framework of the house we'll be working on for the week. I am truly amazed at how much work we got done today. Leaving the work site with an almost complete frame of a room was a great feeling. I am so excited to go back tomorrow to fully utilize the scaffolding we constructed. Hopefully tomorrow we will be able to start laying siding on the walls. After an early awakening at 7am, a fantastic day of hard work, a homemade dinner and a few very intense games of Mafia, I'd have to say it has been a great experience so far.

Best, Taylor

Day 2 of work officially done. This day started out great when Rob caught what I did with what Darrell- I forgot his name- said to Josh: "Yeah, uh-huh." I thought that was great. I felt like we didn't do as much as we did yesterday, but that's only because what we did today was a lot more time consuming. Working with the power drill and the saw today was awesome because it was something new from just nailing boards together. I was knocked out on the bus tour which was terrible because I tried so hard to stay up. I'm just a sleeping machine; I'll sleep anywhere. After work I learned how to flick a Frisbee very well; I enjoyed that time with Rob. After that I successfully conquered Norman in three consecutive games of billiards, which was only fair because he always dominates me in Ping-Pong. Anyways, I'm excited to see how the rest of this week pans out- and hopefully this awkward sun burn on my face goes away.

We also got our shirts today, BOOYAHH!

Angel Acosta

Tuesday, March 13, 2012

I can start off by saying that today brought some intense sun, and it might have burned me a little bit. However, working on the roof- finally! - was definitely worth it. Not going to lie, I kind of felt on top of the world up there. Quick, interlude, I just tried to kill my person in the game assassin and it didn't work. I even used the word, so basically I can't ever use it again...great. Anyways, I've really enjoyed working with the local workers and getting to know them. You never to realize that every person has an interesting story just waiting to be uncovered. For instance, I got to talking with Daren while working with him on the roof and he found a common interest in Frank Sinatra. WHAT UP! Can't wait for tomorrow!

Caitie Simpson

This day started pretty bad for me because Caitie killed me this morning, right after breakfast...Spider Monkey! I think I'll try to help her to kill my person because it could be so much fun! ☺ Everybody

worked hard this morning; the roof starts to look good now. It's too bad that it started to rain; I hope we have better weather tomorrow. We all enjoyed the lunch with the workers and the nice ladies that cooked it. I love spending time talking with everybody at lunch. Then we arrived to the tour time in Greenwood. I sat next to Chad so he told me some stories about the houses we saw and the university too. We went back to work and I spent a part of the afternoon hammering the rafters, I was quite proud of myself because heights scare me usually. Later I helped lifting the plywood, and had a nice talk with Michal. When we went back to the Church, I walked around the Church and the weather was awesome. I liked this relaxing moment after a work day. I discovered that some of us here are really good in Ping-Pong and I matched a nice pool game between Norman and Angel. SO overall it was a good day. I like hanging with you guys, can't wait to finish this room tomorrow.

P.S. Singing along to country music in the van on the way back was awesome! Ce spring-break en Caroline de sud restera inoubliable, pour nous et pour la famille de Sharon qui aura bientôt une belle maison neuve. ☺

Sarah Tourteau

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

This morning was exhausting in the rafters but I finally got the hang of putting nails in with a hammer so that was exciting for me.

I actually really enjoyed our discussion tonight. Normally, I am a very optimistic person but when it comes to religion, I tend to be more skeptical. I really think that growing up in such a religious household, where I would sit on my Grandpa's knee while he would read the Bible to me, made me this way. I personally feel that I should only pray when I want to; that way it is more sincere and less ritualistic like praying before every meal can be. I know that I touched upon this in the discussion group already but I became skeptical because I am scared that people are simply doing things to know how Christian they are or to gain more "salvation points". This trip has made me think about religion and I am questioning things much more and I really value this. It also makes me ask though if we would be experiencing the same things if we weren't staying at a church and working with such religious people. Would we feel the same sense of community? This is just something to think about.

Mical

Suddenly I started to think about why we do service trips. Is that for a reason? No! We come here just to help and all of these are just from our heart. We learn from people who are helping us see that sometimes life doesn't have to find purpose for everything. Maybe, it is just something from our heart, a push, an inspiration, and a willing. People always ask why do this and do that, but I think we just need to follow our heart sometimes. Also, we need to find the time to value and pursue our own interests in our life, which is meaningful and could fulfill our heart.

From China, I always thought I should work hard. But now, I will not see a person for if they work hard or not but rather what is the purpose before their hard work. Working hard is a process, not a destination. Going back to the service trip, I think what I learn is that what we do does not have to have a reason; sometimes it just has to come from the heart.

Alan Yao

I cannot believe how much of a fantastic week this is turning into. During our reflection and ups and downs discussion at the end of the day we all tend to have 3 ups and sometimes no downs at all. I am constantly shocked by the amount of generosity of this community. Every day, we have come home to goodies and desserts by people from Westminster Presbyterian and tomorrow we'll go to Chad's Dads house for a BBQ.

The majority of the day I spent up on the roof nailing in panels. We have come so far since Monday. Soaking in the 80 degree sun was totally worth the hard work and slight sunburn. I have enjoyed getting to know everyone. Looking back to the beginning of the week is strange to see how far we've grown as a team. Even though I accidentally committed suicide in our game of Assassin today, I still claim sweet victory for getting Nicki to say, "smart board." A few desserts, an abs workout, a church service and hours of roofing created yet another great day.

Best, Taylor

Thursday, March 15, 2012

Today was great! I enjoyed the dinner at Chad's parents' house. They were all extremely generous and the food was delicious. I do wish though that his family sat with us so we could talk to them more. I had a wonderful time talking to Nicki and Andrew at dinner. Discussing Native American culture and high school was wonderful.

I think today really made me realize how close we all have become and I hope it stays this way once we get to school. I can't believe tomorrow is our last day.

Mical

Friday, March 16, 2012

Just another ordinary day in Greenwood. Haha, just kidding. Our last day at the work site was not the most eventful but still a great one. The day truly became great when Sharon came to join us for lunch. Even though she did not stay for very long, the opportunity to speak with her was great. The reflection tonight was so very good. Everyone in the group really said great quotes and memories that we made this week. Tonight is the last night so that sucks but life goes on and all I can hope for is that the friendships made will last.

Andrew

If this service trip left anyone apathetic (for whatever reason) before, after today they surely shed that feeling. It was a pretty productive construction day and the house is looking surprisingly amazing; surprisingly, because we have no previous building experience. Anything resembling a house is amazing because we are "constructionally" challenged. It wasn't what happened at work though; rather it was our time at Chad's house afterwards that highlighted the day. It was Chad's birthday and so naturally we sang to him until he turned red with embarrassment. He offered us a chicken the size of the very house we were building and indigestion- induced baked beans. Probably the best dinner this week. I got to talk to this man who literally introduced himself in a Daffy Duck voice, as opposed to figuratively of course. But anyways he was quite interesting. Like an improv legend without the humor. After that we did reflections and up/down at his house. It was here that Chad revealed to all of us his battle with cancer

and his inspirational message: "Find your own habitat". We all found this so inspirational and everything, but I think there needs to be a challenge issued. In the present we all feel so strongly about this. But the challenge is incorporating this into the future. We can say we'd do something but until we do it, we're still going to be in search of this HABITAT.

Sean

Saturday, March 16, 2012

It's early on a Saturday morning and we start the day with a descent breakfast before hitting the road again. It has been an impressive week; it has been a great week and the time has flown by so fast. Yesterday was our last day at the construction site. It was a nice day- not too much work, more time to talk to Chad and his crew to say goodbye. The efforts of our group work were clearly visible from the finished roof, porch and side door. The gratitude of the volunteers was moving and our feelings to not work at this house today and see it being finished for the very nice homeowner, who brought us cake, was sad. The daily reflection was special. I love the impression that every single one of us had a special experience and will take one message back home: find your own habitat-that Chad emphasized at his birthday party- take your time to reflect and confront the need of your communities, these are the best reasons and efforts to make a difference in life.

Norman

Although it's bright and early on a Saturday, I'm still thinking back to Barry's story about how he saved a little girl from her drug addict Mom and from going into the foster system. When he finished telling the story I was astonished and told him that he was such a good person. He dismissed me right away and stated that he wasn't a good person he just did the right thing. In fact, he mentioned that all guys on the worksite, "his buddies", would have done the exact same thing. I'm not sure why out of the whole week this stood out to me the most, but I am grateful that I got the chance to talk to him. Maybe in doing the right thing it got him where he is today. I'm fortunate enough if I can turn out to be almost as great as him.

Carrie

Sunday, March 11, 2012

Today was the second day of our trip. We travelled from Charlotte, NC to Greenwood, SC. I really enjoyed the hike this morning- and the drive to trying to find the hike. We got really lost but we had fun listening to an awesome playlist. I really like having a smaller group of students and I felt like I got to talk to almost everyone in the group today. We met the people hosting us at the church and they were really friendly. At reflection today Alan said that he was surprised how willing they are to allow us to take over their rooms, games, kitchens, etc. I've never seen a group so willing to trust us with their space and belongings when they haven't met us before. I've only encountered that on service trips and I think it is really nice.

Last night when we were grocery shopping we were taking a really long time checking out and we started talking to the people behind us. We found out that their son worked in the city we were going to for our service and I commented that it's such a small world and he said "it is when you take the time to talk to people around you." It was a nice reminder to purposefully slow down and say hi to the people

around you. We also found out that we are putting on a roof for our house. I really look forward to starting work tomorrow and hopefully talking to Larry more about the area where we are building.

Nicki

Monday, March 12, 2007

Today was amazing. Getting to the worksite for the first time was a really satisfying feeling after our long drives. Working on the first few beams was challenging at first, but I got better at nailing it in which was needed. I have been relating a lot of my experience to my previous service trip in New Orleans from last year but from a different perspective. This time, I am one of the coordinators and team leaders and the responsibility that comes with that has pushed me in terms of what to expect from the trip and how to make it an amazing experience for my team members as opposed to just for me. I really love my team and am so happy with Josh and my selection of our members. Truly a great group of people to work with.

Yasmine

Tuesday March 13, 2012

A South Carolina Haiku:

Angel sleeps STAR SHIPS
Hammering nails: frustration
Cranes roofs funfetti

I really enjoyed today's work at this site, I felt like everyone got into a nice groove very early in the day. Often on the first "work" day of trips, there's a substantial amount of "learning the ropes", so to speak and trying to figure out everyone's role. Maybe due to the number of Habitat volunteers working with us, it was easier to seek guidance and understand the work we were tasked to do. It's also always a great feeling to leave a worksite feeling accomplished and able to see the tangible results of our work. I mean, we put a roof on a house today and it's only day 1.

Tonight's reflection was great in seeing how students were grappling with these social justice issues (gender, SES) and I look forward to seeing how we will respond throughout the week, both in conversation with our hosts and each other.

Rob

Tuesday, March 13, 2012

Although it started to rain today at the worksite, we still managed to make the most of our time. We placed plywood on the roof and I began to build the backyard porch with Larry and Angel. Working with the machine gun was frustrating; however, meeting Sharon (the home owner) put the work into perspective. It gave me the motivation to continue working hard. By working with the Greenwood volunteers and meeting Sharon, I realized that Habitat for Humanity not only helps build homes for those in need but builds community with their volunteer's experience. I found that HFH educates their volunteers in regards to poverty and I hope people use such an experience to bring about structural, governmental, and social change.

Josie Munoz

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

This is my first trip coming down South and "Boy, I'm having a darn good time y'all!" In all seriousness this trip really has been an eye opening experience. Without a doubt, the opportunity to work with Habitat for Humanity and contribute to a cause that will provide someone a home is awesome but all the extra great things that have happened in the process has made this experience priceless. I was discussing with Nikki today how great our team dynamics are, we have all come together without worrying about our egos and hiding our personalities, and just being real with one another. I know this isn't the easiest task since we all came from Dickinson, where most of the time we have our guards up about what other people think. I have also really enjoyed the amazing people of Greenwood. They are such genuine people and conversing with them is just easy and engaging. Last but not least, the food here is amazing! I'm honestly considering marrying a southern girl for her family's cooking skills. That's just a joke. I mean no offense whatsoever. No protests please.

Andrew Dietz

Wednesday, another great day on the construction site. When we left the Church, it was really foggy but quickly the sun appeared and this day was very VERY hot. So I have the feeling that we were less productive today, some of us burned I thin. The roof is totally covered now so the air in the house was fresh, that was great. Jossie, Alan, Yasmie and I worked on the porch and it was done in the afternoon. It looks so pretty, I love it. I felt very proud that I participated. ☺ A bunch of people died today in the assassin game. I personally helped to kill Norman that was fun. We came back to the Church quickly because we were incited to dinner by the community. I was seated with Caitie, Elise, Taylor, Mical, Nicki, and Barry's wife, Sue and her mother! We discussed a lot, they were really nice. And finally tonight I played Ping-Pong again, I love Ping-Pong now and we had an unforgettable dessert night all together, dancing, singing and eating cookies

Love y'all, Sarah

Friday, March 16, 2012

Today was the last day on the work site. Throughout the course of the week, the work we have done on the site working with each other and the other volunteers and home owners has been the highlight of my week. Also getting to know the group has been great, especially when it involves extreme amounts of laughter. The trip is too hard for me to sum up into a short journal entry. So for a random snapshot, see my poem in a few pages.

Love, Elise

Today, I'm really moved by the lady's gratefulness and thanks to us. I really feel that our trip is really meaningful and we're making an impact on not only the house but people's lives.

Also, I felt sad when I said bye to Chad. I remember the dinner at Chad's house. He told us how he sees his life and what he finds meaningful in his life. Finally, he told us to find our own habitat. What we should value is our value in society and our own passions in life. We should not just pursue for what people think but what we think for our own value and life.

For me, I will keep thinking about my life and find out my values and what I really have passions for. I will find my habitat!!!

Alan

Our Weird Habitat
When we depart
Everyone is sleep deprived
But oh the wonderful joy
We feel once we've arrived

Yasmine as Ms. Mafia
Mical hammering my pants
Group naps, abundance of cakes,
The woman in the green with the dance.

The time I slept for three
Hours and no one woke me up.
Darrin, Nicki, turn the radio on
So Sarah can sing about her red solo cup.

Too distracted by Josh in his
Beater with the drill, Shocked
When Rhett shouts through the
Bathroom door with me in the stall still.

Normal and Angel building a
Phenomenal starship, while Sean
Pans a prank. Too bad you can't
Find the toothpaste, I'd offer to
Check our shoes but they're
Pretty rank.

Reflections contain Allen's
Thoughtful words, while
Taylor, Andrew, and Rob hiding
In the nursery is cause enough
To carry swords

Jossie on the porch as Larry's
Apprentice, lovely church ladies

Staying behind to clean up
Our lunch mess.

Too bad about assassin, perhaps
Caitie would have one, but
Nothing beats the feeling at
The end of the day when
The work is done

In a word _____.

Elise

Saturday, March 17, 2012

Today the group packed up to make our trip back to Carlisle. It seems like so long ago since we first left for Charlotte, yet it doesn't seem like we had nearly enough time here. I think it is clear from last night's reflection just how much this week has meant to everyone on the trip. As a fellow psychology major, I can relate to Sean's reflection on our team dynamic. For me, these trips are very much shaped by the people with whom we share the experience. I am writing this journal entry after arriving home in Carlisle (sorry, Mira!) and having retold the story of the trip to many of my friends and colleagues. I always share how, for the most part, no one knew each other before this experience, but we all got along perfectly. I feel fortunate to have been part of a group that represented Dickinson so well on our first trip to Greenwood. I imagine we left the impression that Dickinson students are hard workers, energetic and inquisitive, appreciative of the generosity shown to us and always up for a good laugh—whhhere's Noman? (Someone informed me that the proper way to achieve Rett's accent was to remove the "r" from Norman's name). I also feel fortunate to have met so many members of the Greenwood community—Sharon, Chad, the volunteers, members of the church—they were so willing to share their stories and they were genuinely committed to making sure we had the best experience possible. I'll close with the words of Chad as the journal wouldn't be complete without his wisdom – "Whatever you do in life, find your own habitat"

Nicki

Hey y'all,

So. It's Friday, March 23rd and I forgot to write in the journal for the Friday of our trip- as a result this journal entry might be a little of Friday and a little of a post-trip reflection. To put myself back in a Greenwood mode, I'm listening to Starships as I type this entry in my office.

In continuing to think about the our trip and the one word I'd use to describe it, my initial word was thought-provoking due to all the conversations we had around religion, southern culture, poverty, and our community interactions. However, after continuing to think about it on Saturday's car ride I found a new word: complete.

Friday really put the "wrapping and bow" on a spectacular week from dinners at Chad's and Westminster parishioners to working with Habitat volunteers and homeowners. Friday included putting the finishing touches on our week's work, joking around with Barry, Chad and Clyde, eating lunch with

Sharon, and having a stellar, honest reflection about our experiences throughout the week. What I most appreciated about Friday night was our reflections on how far our group had come in developing relationships, how comfortable we felt around each other and how to make sense of our experience. From conversations with y'all throughout this first week back, it appears those bonds have only continued to develop and I have enjoyed running into each of you and hearing about how you've eaten lunch together and made an effort to see one another.

I find myself wanting to tell other students and friends "Be Still. Find your own habitat." But, I'm pretty sure that advice would be lost on them and they'd just stare at me with blank curiosity. The words, however, continue to stick with me and I hope that they have for each of you in the chaotic busy nature that is life at Dickinson.

Be still, Rob