

Noah:

It is only the second day of service work on our trip and I already have so many amazing memories of spring break 2014. I spent the first two work days painting the rooms of the impoverished, elderly woman's house. On Monday, the family interacted very little with us. However, today they opened up more and we had some great conversations. The thing that stood out to me the most was her confusion over why college students would spend their spring break serving others rather than going to the beach or somewhere else.

However, after two days into the trip, the reasons I went on this service trip seem clearer than ever. As a follower of Christ, I desire to genuinely love others through my words and actions. I enjoy using this time to help others in an impoverished community and seeing how that has brightened their lives. Furthermore, I love the rich conversations and relationships that have developed among the members of our service team. Considering the lasting impact of the work that we accomplish throughout the week and the new friendships formed on the trip, I am thrilled going on a service trip for spring break rather than going to the beach.

Catie:

My favorite part about today was meeting the man who directs the Heritage Center where we tutored young girls tonight who come from impoverished homes and live in bad areas. This man does so much for his community and I was amazed to be able to talk to him one on one about some of it. Last year, he organized a dinner on Christmas. He passed out thirty half deep dish pans for people to bring food for the dinner. Over 100 pans of food showed up. That is amazing that so many people showed up to help. He said the next year (this past Christmas) over 200 pans of food arrived. I find it amazing that they were able to organize this. He mentioned that they have a hard time getting volunteers for tutoring which is sad because they have such a bright group of girls, but it's great they get so many people willing to help. I loved tutoring the girls because they had so much spirit and hope. The girl I tutored was so sweet. We worked on adjectives and by the end of the hour, I felt she had come such a long way and was really getting it. It made me so happy to see her really understand. I love working with kids because they seem to have things figured out in ways adults don't. I think it is awesome to see how they think and process things.

Piper:

My favorite part of the trip so far has been working with kids. On Tuesday, I became instant friends with a fourth grader named Kara when she asked me to hold her glasses so she could hula hoop. I then spent the next two hours getting my hair braided, my jewelry taken off, and my picture drawn. We may have done some reading and grammar somewhere in there too. Kara was a sweet girl but she opened my eyes to a dilemma I've never faced. How does one respond when a little girl you just met tells you her grandma is dying? How do you explain why her daddy has to spend large amounts of time away from her to work? I am still puzzled.

Today we went to play basketball with a bunch of boys. I bonded with a kid named Andre. We was on my team (my first place team). Andre loves to draw and read Percy Jackson. The highlights of the night were getting dubbed MVP of my team (a solely honorary title, if you ask me) and getting a hug goodbye from Andre. On the drive back, we rocked out to Michael Jackson and Journey. I can't wait to play Mafia and have a dance party tonight! ☺

Noelle:

My experience with this service trip has been surreal. The highlight of my trip has been discovering several of my weaknesses and meeting AMAZING people! Its been wonderful. Deciding to mutually spend the only break of the semester being of service has been worth everything I thought and more. The opportunity to be of service to a family that needed me-and us-has helped me grow as a sensitive and industrious individual and words cannot describe how much this means to me. Today, being the second-to-last day, has been emotional for me because I honestly do not want to end this. It's the first time in a LONG while that I have felt useful and driven. I just hope that my academic pursuits complement this new drive and helps shape my path in the very near future. Its good to be giving people a hand up instead of a hand down; it a whole new mind-blowing perspective. I'm really excited! To anyone who helped make this trip possible, fun, and memorable, I say THANK YOU!

Amanda G:

As we start our journey home, I think we are all beginning to realize how great this trip was. We are starting to say our goodbyes and starting to realize how much we will miss the people of Macon, having 14 friends to talk to at any hour that tired feeling at the end of the day, the endless laughs, trying new food...the list could go on! As I think about what I am leaving behind, I try to focus on what I am taking with me. I had hoped to learn new skills, reflect on service, and meet a group of students. I didn't expect to meet so many inspiring people. The hope and optimism of the Macon people inspire me to remain positive through challenging times. Most importantly you all inspire me. You all care so much for each other and the world you live in. Throughout the week each of you shared how you want to improve your community now and in the future. I know that each of you changed the Macon community. Each of you changes each other. And you will all do amazing things.

Faith Park

Wow! I honestly don't know where to start but today was basically indescribable but AMAZING! We arrived at our worksite at 8 AM and started our day with devotion. Tommy from the Fuller Center talked about how our main purpose for doing this work is to help each other and make the world a better place. I think that this may be something I may remember for a while.

We were split in 3 different groups—street cleanup crew, crew at worksite (Mr. Wes house), and Ms, Wylie's house. I was part of street cleanup crew with Freida, Elizabeth, Tyler, and Elizabeth. We cleaned the street Mr. Wes's house was one-we raked, shoveled, and threw away all the trash and leaves. Maybe 40 minutes later or so, students from Mercer University joined us. I was super pumped to work with them and started talk to some of them. They were all so friendly. Then, I started talking to Ngozi

and we literally bonded in like 10 minutes-it was crazy how we shared so much in common. We decided that were like half-sisters and inverse of each other.

After the street clean up, Ngozi and I started painting the ceiling together in one of the Mr. Wes bedrooms. Ngozi and I had really intense and deep conversations-I don't think I ever bonded and opened up to someone during such short span of time. After painting the ceiling (it felt so great to finish it successfully with my half-sister ☺), Ngozi and I went outside the house to scrape off the lead paints from the outer walls. Although it was very hot and tedious, talking to Ngozi while working made everything better. It was also good to know that Mr. Wes's family will be as much lower exposure from the toxic lead paint.

The experience overall working at the site was so great. Through our service, we are at least able to make a small difference and plant seeds of hope in some people lives. Plus, it was fantastic interacting with students from Mercer University.

Mercer University graciously invited us for dinner and we had delicious spaghetti dinner. After dinner, Elise, Joey, and Jerome gave me a tour of the campus. We walked around the Mercer campus for a while. It was such a gorgeous campus-I just felt so happy going on a walk in such beautiful weather. At one point we ended up at their new football field and sat there and had really good conversations. Elise and I ran a huge lap around the field which was so refreshing. They also all helped me say "y'all." ☺

It was very challenging emotionally when we had to leave Mercer University. Ngozi gave me her bracelet from Nigeria as a friendship bracelet and I literally almost started crying. It is always hard saying goodbye but I felt blessed that we had a chance to meet such wonderful and welcoming group of students from Mercer University. I'm confident that a small piece of my heart will remain in Macon, Georgia. I'll remember friends I connected with today (Ngozi, Bloom, Rain, Elise, Jerome, Joey, Ryan, Cynthia, etc.)

I am super pumped to go back to our worksite tomorrow morning!!! Let another meaningful day commence!!! OH YEAH!

Austin MacDougall

It's the second full day of work for us and were starting to get into our routine. The day began at 7 AM with a cacophony of cell phone alarms, and we arose, bleary-eyed and tired, to grab breakfast in our makeshift common room. Last weeks world of midterm exams and late night sessions in the Micro Room seems like it was another lifetime ago. Now, were hundreds of miles away from central Pennsylvania and coffee-fueled study sessions have given way to breakfast cereals and bagel lunches.

As we went outside there was a noticeable morning chill hanging in the air, but compared to conditions we experienced up north is was nothing. I drove one of the cans to the worksite and we arrived to find Diane from the Fuller Center. We began with morning devotionals and then set out to continue the work we did before. I began by working with James to remove a large section of pope from below the house. We also had to remove debris from underneath the house so that vapor barriers could be installed.

After spending an hour or so working on that, we went inside and painted several of the rooms in the house. After spending all day outside yesterday, it was really refreshing to work indoors and away from the heat-even in early March temperatures climbed up to 80 degrees.

Perhaps the most interesting thing to happen on this trip was when a local news team came to record part of our work. They came into one of the rooms that Faith, James, and I were painting in and recorded some video. After that, they interviewed James to find out about why we chose to come to Macon over spring break. It was pretty cool to see that our work was already attracting attention which gives me hope that others will learn about spring break service opportunities and will want to help out. After our work day was done, we went back to the church for some much needed showers. Our next task was to go to the Heritage Center, a local organization that provided after school recreation and homework time for young students (mostly around middle school aged). After sharing pizza with them, we helped them with their homework trying to work in pairs when possible. I working with a girl named Mikayla, who needed to define words and write example sentences for each of them. I showed her how to use a dictionary to look up words and after her homework was done we bonded over shared interest such as pets and amusement park rides.

As I walked out of the tutoring center, I had a new appreciation for the resources that I had as a student from my childhood to now. I remembered how important my one on one time with teachers, parents, and tutors had been on my own development. I've always taken these things for granted but the events today made me realize how privileged I am to have had all of these resources growing up.

Even with all of the work we did today, we still found time to have fun. Inside the church we were saying: our group has begun to bond really well, and even the van rides to and from the worksite have been a ton of fun. I'm also amazed at how open people have been in reflections; I've found out things about people who I've know for years that I've never known before. I've really enjoyed the trip so far and I think I've had a chance to change myself for the better in a very short amount of time. I hope the rest of the trip continues to be just as great!

Fredd Reynaga

After two days on the job sight things are starting to come together. I like how as a group we are all getting along and trusting each other more. The car ride down from PA was very beneficial in getting to know one another. It definitely helped in creating a bond with one another. This bond has been extremely helpful in the jobsite because we trust each other in the tasks we are assigned and know that we can count on each other when we need help. What also helps things is that we play games to pass the time. We vastly play the "contact" that Piper showed us. Before we know it snack time, then lunch, then clean up time. It's a good and sad time simultaneously. The reason for this is because we are all having a good time that quitting time is an indication that the day is coming to an end. I get we are all tired that we want to leave and shower. Tutoring the girls last night was such a great time. It helped me get a grasp of what I was going to be doing after graduation and how much I am looking forward to working with youth. The community here at Macon has really accepted us as part of them and we can see that they are grateful for what we are doing. The biggest satisfaction that I get from this service trip

is that I have been blessed with the opportunity to visit another community and be of service in any way possible. I could not have asked for a better group to do it with. While I was nervous at first, I am now really glad that I came down with these 14 people. I have learned so much about them and myself, as well. Sunday is going to be really sad because it will be the end of the trip. However, I know it will not be the end of the friendships and bonds we have created. I will most definitely cherish these last few days we have together. This week will be one of the moments I will remember the most from my four years at Dickinson.

James George

I can't believe that tomorrow is our last day working on Birch Street! It simultaneously feels like we have been here for a year and a minute. It feels like a year because I have gotten to know everyone so well and share so many engaging experiences and conversations with everyone. It feels like a minute because I have had such an amazing time. I can't express just how much I have enjoyed getting to know everyone! Also, I am so happy we will have the car ride back!

I really appreciate the time to reflect on issues that matter to me, such as service, happiness, priorities, equality, truth, etc. Thinking about these issues is best done through collaboration and I believe that our trip represents the potential of group collaboration and conversation. Everyone threw themselves into the trip with an open heart and a desire to make new friends in a meaningful way. The group, each individual member, made our collective experience great.

My main goal as a leader of this trip is to make everyone's experience as meaningful as possible, not only in a positive way, but in a challenging way. I think everyone, including myself, has been challenged to think in a different way. We have all engaged with many different people this week and we have had the opportunity to converse and start a dialogue that cannot be accomplished at Dickinson (I only say cannot because there is no time to successfully immerse one's self with a small group of people and sustain an open and meaningful conversation resulting from a shared experience.)

I find that while I am at school I tend to try to take on everything and spread my time too thinly. I really enjoy service trips because they open up my perspective and remind me that there are more important things than school and stress.

I am beyond happy right now and I feel content for the first time in a while. (I feel like this trip has almost been like group therapy!) I really enjoy the company of everyone on the trip and I look forward to continuing the friendship I have made once we return to campus.

Elizabeth Lanigan

I'm a little late writing this—our final work day on Birch Street was actually yesterday. Finishing the second closet in the morning was a little anticlimactic after all the challenging projects that Tyler and I accomplished, but it was so rewarding to talk with Mr. Wes about the layout of the closet and to know that all the effort we put into the project was deeply appreciated by the family.

For the rest of the day, I scraped paint off the side of the house. I found the job to be really boring and frustrating the first time I did it, but the second time was actually really great. I learned to play contact, the geography game, and had a really thought-provoking conversation with Kyle and Noah about our favorite memories, biggest fears, and the meaning of life (cliché, but true).

The conversation made me think a lot about the bonds that formed on this trip. I felt like everyone was their best selves while we were together—for me personally, I thought that these kinds of connections were possible because we were forced to be open and to make ourselves vulnerable throughout this entire trip. When you leave everything familiar behind and enter into an entirely new culture and experience, you're forced to reach out and make contact with those around you.

If this service trip had taken place in Carlisle, the familiarity of the location would have gotten in the way of the bonding. We needed a reason to bind together and sharing something completely new and unfamiliar was perfect.

I'm happier than I have been in a long time, and I'm going to try to make some changes in my life based on my experience on this trip. Something about this trip works. I know I can't be content all the time, and that some of the positivity that I'm feeling is because everything is new and exciting, but this trip has made me think about balance, and what really matters. I'm not sure exactly how this trip will manifest itself in my life in the future, but I know that it will.

Caroline

Today was the first day of my first ever service trip. The day started off with everyone in very high spirits. Everyone was up on time and chowing on fruit loops and cheerios. My car ride to the site consisted of choreographed dance moves to old school Justin Timberlake which we decided to describe as "creamy" and "smooth." I was really excited when we arrived at the site. I was assigned to street duty and the group that "hit the streets" did an amazing job and it is crazy how the cleaning of leaves can transform a whole neighborhood. The highlight of street cleaning was when Frieda told me about Ed and Eddy which apparently is a cartoon network show that I will be watching on Netflix when I get back. Time with Mercer students exceeded my expectations. Faith met her twin so that was cool. Seeing the homeowner and how excited he was and how grateful he was for our work was awesome. I'm really excited to talk to him more in the upcoming week. Playing Frisbee and soccer with Dickinson and Mercer kids was amazing. It reminded me of summer and how much I miss laughing so hard you can't run. I miss that at Dickinson and I wish I had that community sense along those lines. My favorite part of the day was Frieda's M+M game. It felt so nice to open up and share something new and feel vulnerable. I loved learning about people and their lives and unique experiences. It's so rare when you can feel so comfortable enough to just share anything with them and feel like a new person after. This is turning out to be one of the best weeks I can remember and I am having so much fun I cannot wait to tell everyone about my experience when I get back home. Can't wait for tomorrow.

Tyler

So far this trip has exceeded expectations. Yesterday we bonded extremely well with the students from Mercer. Austin and I facebook friended Joey while we played the fabulous game called Quelf with Amanda Hansen and Piper. Later, team MmmKay attempted to dominate the soccer field, but we were unsuccessful. I was really glad we met them and had the chance to make some Georgian friends.

For the first day of work, I cleaned the streets with the street crew and talked to Frieda a little but about her family. It was very refreshing to hear this common goal of cleaning which was a great foundation for good conversation.

After lunch, Elizabeth and I were tasked with cutting pieces of wood with the power saw and then hammering them underneath the floor of the home in order to cover up some of the old pipe holes. I was very happy to be given the task as my dad is an electrician and works with power tools a lot, so I have some experience and familiarity with it. We worked with Brent, a freshman from Mercer who wants to be a bio engineer and create prosthetic limbs. He was extremely helpful, nice, and very quiet. Without him, we would have been completely lost. At times we were very frustrated with the nails, but through determination and ingenuity, we were able to finish the job. I'm actually kind of sad it is finished because I very much enjoyed it and working with Elizabeth.

Today, we didn't have the Mercer kid which was very sad. Things seemed to be a bit calmer because of this. I got a rask of the paint job. I feel for everyone that has had to do this job. It is not the most fun. Although it does feel fairly rewarding when you take a huge chunk out.

Reflections have been great. Everybody seems to pour their hearts out and to get themselves and their feelings out there. The environment is perfect so that I never don't share my opinion. I never thought I could be so comfortable with people I have just met. I look forward to the rest of the week, to helping Mr. Wes and Mrs. Wiley, to tutoring kids, playing crazy games and experiencing life in a way I never have before. I will be very sad when it's gone. I hope that each and every one of us can stay in contact in some shape or form.

Freida

Today was pretty awesome I must admit. Aside from the sudden drowsiness and hand swelling of course-latex who knows!! I met a lot of awesome people on this trip including Mr. Wes's wife and son. Dianne was sweet and welcoming enough to invite me to Rotary with her today. Considering how much I wanted to (or thought I did) join, I could not deny that request. Dianne is a crazy driver but I appreciated her driving. She showed me how the town of Macon was divided by social class along the River. I thought of the similar situation in Cuerca, Ecuador and the railroad tracks in Carlisle. All examples are pretty distinguishing and remind me of why it is I am so interested in community service. At Rotary, a minister could not stand my shift so much that he handed me a 20 and told to buy a new one at Mercer! That was one of many highlights today. The other was seeing how comfortable everyone was—to the point where people started to take charge and manage different projects. I have yet to call my mother this entire trip. Oops. Anyhow glad I gave into the pressure and coordinated this trip. I am getting the chance to exercise my leadership skills, though I am not completely sure of how strong they are!

Faith is the Mafia. Always will be. Maybe my test of leadership should be trying to prove to people that she is. (Also Piper is pretty good at deceiving) Love them all dearly.

Kyle

I tried to go into this trip without any expectation of what it would be like. Going into this year one goal on my bucket list was to go on a service trip and I almost did not end up going on one. I found out two weeks before we were going so I just went with it. From the first grilled cheese fundraiser I knew that this was going to be fun. I was really excited from that point on. It's hard to say what I've taken away from this trip yet. We've done a lot of reflecting (which has been some of my favorite parts of the trip) and had a lot of really awesome moments. In the best way possible, we are all a bunch of weirdos. It is cool how in the span of just one week we have gotten so close and felt comfortable around each other to tell our stories a bit. It is an abroad experience in miniature which is pretty cool. That type of experience is something that I've missed. In that way it's a shame that it's only a week because we are just beginning to let out our true selves. In a way it's cool though because it's given me the chance to work on some things.

For one it's taught me the presence. I knew that I'd have only 9 days on this trip and it's been nice to be completely invested in one place for that much time. I intentionally left my phone at school to help me stay completely on this trip. Especially in today's society, we can stretch ourselves across many geographic locations and never truly be where we physically are. I know that this not something I could do all the time (I have to talk to my parents and family for one) so it was nice to take advantage of it when I could. Presence has also helped me not revert back to habits that I am trying to change. When I start to feel uneasy or anxious I tend to become reclusive and shy away from people. Being this close to people all the time, I have been unable to revert back to this state and become an ogre as I typically do. My negative attitude negatively affects the group dynamic and that is something that I cannot do. I can't be impacting those around me just because I'm in a funk. Especially being this close I've been forced to communicate these issues when they arise which has been really good. While I understand my lifestyle at Dickinson will be different, I hope to incorporate what I have learned thus far.

I've also enjoyed getting involved in many different experiences here, from building homes, attending a church service, meeting other kids our age doing service, tutoring and group activities. It has been cool to interact with many people from different age groups and backgrounds in Macon. In that way I don't feel like I'm an outsider coming into this community then leaving. One really cool experience has been painting Mr. Wileys house and interacting with the people working there. One day we got to talking about our different experiences and she asked us why we were coming to Macon because she was trying to get out. Having many different perspectives of how it is to live in Macon It is not a lifestyle I fully understand, but it has been nice to broaden my perspective even a little bit.

The cool thing about this trip is that I will still feel its impact after it's over. Like I was told when I was abroad, "This is a time release experience." It's hard to know what all these experiences will mean while they are happening and that's really exciting. It's nice to know that there is a lot of people out there trying to make the world a better place. It is a lot more than would be thought seeing all of the negative things

that we see on the news. I've really enjoyed this experience and I'm really glad I got to cross one more thing off my bucket list!