

Mission Trip 2007

By Linda McKiernan

Well, I remember every little thing as if it happened just yesterday...a car, three 12-person vans, one very large tool truck and a six-person mini-van left the church parking lot loaded with 46 church members and friends of church members. For years I have heard the enthusiastic details of comic relief that have followed the youth group on their yearly mission trip. Every year the dynamics are a little different. Sleeping arrangements, bathroom and shower facilities are always tricky when you're trying to plan for a large group.

As a newbie, I was unsure of many things. It was a little intimidating at first squeezing into a van full of teenagers, most of them having had a few years mission trip experience under their belts. In the parking lot before we left I saw some familiar faces. People who I have met briefly after service or at a church function were now stuffed into the vans among the youth claiming their spot for the ride. By the time we arrived in Watertown, those familiar faces all had names.

When we first arrived at the work site, the task that we had before us was a little sketchy. We clearly had to put a roof on this house and some windows in, but it's a little difficult to envision this when you're staring at a bunch of two by fours that are erected slightly to the left of sixteen on center. So, with a little direction from those in our group who are the more experienced carpenters, I set to the task of building window frames. As the job progressed, work could be found for everyone in our group. At first the younger teens were instructed to help lift a sheet of plywood or give a hand with a two by four. I must admit these tasks can be tedious, especially when you're not sure what needs to be done with the two by four; but, as the house took shape, it became easier to envision just what needed to be done next. I saw the youth in our group ban together to complete some of the tasks with an enthusiasm I have never witnessed before. They set realistic goals for themselves and, once achieved, moved on to setting some new goals. They instructed the less experienced in the group on how to complete the tasks. Who would have thought that digging a trench could be so rewarding?

Our evenings were filled with fun and food, laughter, and reflection on the day's work. Highs and lows for the day were shared as well as some really great homemade cookies. I became witness to the formation of friendships and community; I watched as the youth gained confidence in their ability to make a difference.

While I was trying to write this, I was struggling with a theme for my reflection on the mission trip. What I have come up with is this: Our youth were inspired to help build two houses, clean Watertown's version of a warehouse, paint a church railing and assist with necessary tasks to make all of this possible. The first time mission trip youth were led by the more experienced youth but also by the adults and Lucia. The mission trips were brought to the church because of Lucia's dedication to the youth of this church. This is a dedication that goes beyond the call of ministry. I can't help but wonder who in Lucia's life inspired her to take on such an exhausting task. Perhaps it was someone just like you or me.