

AREA YOUTH RETURN FROM URBAN MINISTRY TRIP TO LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS

3,128 miles, 11 days, 600 bottles of water and 9 states. What is it? The 2005 First American Lutheran Youth Organization's Ministry Trip to Lynn, Massachusetts.

Bright and early (5:30 am) on July 14th, 2005, 23 young adults and 6 chaperones departed to the urban ministry site of Lynn, Massachusetts. According to federal statistics, 16.5% of the residents of Lynn live below the poverty level with over 45% of housing in need of critical repairs. This coupled with the high cost of housing has left many residents struggling with the ability to afford adequate housing and the basic necessities of life.

This year's trip was the fourth partnership our youth have had with Youthworks, Inc. Previous trips have been to McGraws, West Virginia, Custer, South Dakota and St. Louis, Missouri. Youthworks, Inc. based in Minneapolis, Minnesota provides relational ministry experiences to approximately 30,000 junior and senior high youth in over 70 different communities yearly. The mission of Youthworks is to provide life changing experiences by partnering with established local urban ministries to address the basic needs of the local community.

Participating in the trip were high school young adults: James Weber, Eddie Wallace, Kyle Messenger, Nathan Swanson, Jeremiah Dettman, Matt Peterson, Charlie Olson, Tyler Nordquist, Jason Heid, Melanie Bradshaw, Ashley Rosenberg, Lindsey Wusterbarth, Mandy Caldie, Breanna Dettman, Cory Muhowski, Dana Scheffen, Kristin Cox, Tria Dickenson, Stacey Heise, Karlie Martens, Carissa Meisner, Lexie Olson and Maria Saez.

Adult chaperones for the trip were: Brad Weber, Jane Weber, Brenda Bradshaw, Tom Olson, Kristi Swanson and Missy Socha.

The host site at Lynn was the Washington Street Baptist Church. Upon arrival, the Oconto First American Lutheran Church Youth joined forces with two other high school groups from Holland, Michigan and Lancaster, Pennsylvania for a week of urban ministry and relational mission work. A total of 67 youth and adults participated during the week at multiple projects in Lynn, Salem and Middleton, Massachusetts.

Youth and adults were divided into six teams and participated in a variety of activities.

Team one was assigned to the Boys and Girls Club of Lynn camp in Middleton. While at the camp our youth assisted in a variety of day programs and experienced the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the area.

Team two assisted the Danvers ARC Center, an adult day care center and at the Salem Mission House. They helped the Salem Mission move to a new location that will be better able to serve the local community.

Team three was assigned to the Day Center for Alzheimers patients, assisting the residents and providing outreach to the community.

Team four was assigned to My Brother's Table, a food pantry, soup kitchen and day shelter, where they helped prepare food for the daily meals for the indigent and homeless. They also assisted in organizing the food pantry.

Team five was assigned to the Greater Lynn Senior Center where they participated in relational ministry opportunities such as bingo, dances and caring conversation.

Team six was assigned to the Washington Street Baptist Church Kid's Club where local area youth participated in a daily vacation bible school.

While at the ministry site, our youth had the opportunity to experience the rich local diversity of the surrounding area with excursions to Gloucester beach, Nahant beach and Boston. While in Boston they were able to visit Quincy Market and Feneuil Hall.

In addition to the urban ministry that the youth participated in, several sightseeing opportunities were also enjoyed. They included a tour of the world famous Chocolate World in Hershey Pennsylvania, a day of touring New York City and a visit to Salem. The group also enjoyed the hospitality of Jane Weber's parents and sister with a great lunch and much needed showers while traveling through Glastonbury, Connecticut. While in New York, the youth were able to visit, Grand Central Station, the Chrysler Building, United Nations, Rockefeller Center, Central Park, Battery Park, Wall Street, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Trinity Church, Times Square, FAO Schwartz and of course Tiffanies. At Salem the group was able to learn about the rich history of the city and was able to participate in a live reenactment of the trial of Bridget Bishop by "Cry Innocent". The final stop on the trip was a visit to Niagara Falls with rides on the "Maid of the Mist".

From eating a meal with the homeless at My Brother's Table to visiting Alzheimers patients and senior citizens, God's presence, love and grace have been with us wherever we have traveled. Many friendships have been made and our eyes have been opened to the struggles of the world. We would like to thank the many people who have supported our ministry and offered prayers and encouragement while we have been on the road.

A planning meeting for the 2006 mission trip is scheduled for Sunday, September 18th at 6:00 pm in the Youth Room at First American Lutheran Church in Oconto. Any youth that are interested in sharing God's love by relational ministry through a mission trip are welcome to attend.

For additional information about next year's mission trip, please call Brad Weber (Youth Director) at 920-834-2479.



YOUTH GROUP AT HERSHEY'S CHOCOLATE WORLD



DR. TOM OLSON AND FRIEND ANGEL AT KID'S CLUB



ALEXA OLSON AND TRIA DICKENSON AT SENIOR CENTER



MISSY SOCHA, ALEXA OLSON AND TRIA DICKENSON AT MY BROTHERS TABLE



JASON HEID AND FRIENDS AT KIDS CLUB



KYLE MESSENGER AT SENIOR CENTER