

Parkway Fellowship students on a mission trip in Diepsloot in northern Johannesburg, South Africa



Mission-minded Katy Teens

Local students are giving back to others here at home and around the globe

Written by Holly Leger

As a teenager, it's easy to get caught up in the world of adolescence. But these Katy teens received a reality check after going on mission trips - some around the world, and others in their own hometown. *Katy Magazine* reached out to these young men and women to hear their inspirational stories.

A World Apart

Johannesburg, South Africa may look like any other large, well-to-do city, but as the youth group at Parkway

Fellowship discovered, the outskirts of the city are the polar opposite. The teenagers walked through squatter camps, performing door-to-door ministries.

Parkway student pastor Chris Sedgwick says the camps have very small square footage, yet house hundreds of thousands of residents and refugees. "It's very hard conditions," Sedgwick says. "It's a maze of shacks. You have to walk sideways in between houses."

Seeing True Joy

The youth group split into groups of four, each one assigned with a translator, and walked from hut to hut to help others, share the story of Jesus, and pray.

Skylar Station, a 17-year-old youth member, says that although she was shocked by the poverty she witnessed while in South Africa, she was just as surprised by the level of pride and joy the people showed for their homes and family. "Even though they're in these horrible conditions, they're still happy," Station says. "They haven't lost sight of hope."

Building Relationships

Traveling with the student organization at Second Baptist Church, 17-year-old Ansley Harris went to Belize City, Belize to help make renovations on a local Catholic school during her spring break.

While Harris and her fellow youth members were painting, the children at the school would periodically come outside during their breaks.

Harris says, "That's when we would stop our work, go build relationships, and get to know the kids." Harris reached out to the parents, too. A mother came to bring her children lunch each day, and Harris said she bonded with their family the entire week.

"Each day, I got to hear more of her story and tell her more of mine," Harris says. "It was neat to pray over her and tell her why I believe what I believe. She was already a Christian, but we went into depth. It was a cool experience, and to talk to her kids about it, too, was neat."

Harris says the experiences she had in Belize, as well as others she's had this year while doing local mission work, helped her learn the world doesn't revolve around her. Instead, she realized she is on Earth to serve, just as Jesus did. "For me, it was kind of a news flash and a slap in the face," Harris explains. "Like, 'Hey, Ansley! What are you doing to serve others? What are you doing to share the gospel?' It was a super humbling experience."

Close to Home

If you double dog dare 18-year-old Josh Corley to do something, he doesn't back down. That is, if it's a dare at Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church.

In 2013, Josh applied for Grace's Double Dog Dare Grant, which offers money to members who would like to plan a mission project. For Josh, that mission plan was easy: help the homeless men and women in the Katy area.

His mother, Dora Corley, says she was not surprised by her son's decision. "Josh has always had a heart towards homeless people," Dora says. "I've asked him why, and he replies, 'You see them all the time, and they're real



Teen mission groups often spend time teaching Bible classes in village schools



Skylar Station and Tanner Clark playing a game with the children of Diepsloot



Second Baptist Church teen Ansley Harris hands out gifts to children in the village



Lache Monroe and Jimmy Richardson washing clothes for some women at the community watering spot

Photo courtesy of Parkway Fellowship

people. But we'll never know who they are, because we just drive by them.”

Assisting the homeless was just part of Josh's plan, though. He has Asperger's syndrome and wanted to do the mission project with other special needs families at The Bridge, a ministry offered at Grace.

Building a Bridge

The Bridge provides services for approximately 50 individuals. Josh said he knew a big group like that could make a big impact, as well as prove to others what they're capable of doing.

“The special needs kids can actually do stuff,” he says. “We're not just sitting around.” With the \$500 Josh received from the grant, he bought Ziploc bags, toiletries, and other essentials. When the project was completed, Dora asked Josh what he thought of the day's work. “He said, ‘I feel great inside.’” KM

HOLLY LEGER is a freelance writer who was constantly reminded during this story what a great spiritual gift serving can be.



Grace Fellowship UMC's special needs ministry, The Bridge, reaches out to those in need in the Houston area

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