

Lancaster, Kentucky

Rural Poverty

Quite some time has passed since we returned from our trip to Eastern Kentucky. Our jeans are clean, our hard hats are gone, and we're back into the daily repetition of our lives at school. We look like the same people as before we participated in Christian Appalachian Project's (CAP) annual Workfest, but if you take a minute to talk to any of the eight members of this trip, you'll see that we have changed. This change may not be drastic or absolute, but it's there if you take a minute to look for it.



On Saturday, March 15th, we left for our pilgrimage to Kentucky. I call it a pilgrimage because we made a stop in Brookfield that Saturday for the Palm Sunday Mass where the priest discussed the purpose of a pilgrimage: a journey from which you are supposed to come back tired but also spiritually rejuvenated. Our trip members found this, if not a crazy coincidence, to be very accurate foreshadowing for the week to come. We arrived at CAP's Camp Kaleb in Eastern Kentucky on Sunday afternoon where the WorkFest volunteers welcomed us, showed us our cabins, and gave us our hard hats that we would need throughout the week. Sunday night, like every evening throughout the week, we had a lovingly prepared, stick-to-your-bones kind of dinner with our St. Norbert trip members. The next four days we would be split up and joined with students from other colleges to go to our specific worksite where many of us would be working with siding, drywall, windows, priming, painting, and some would even construct the frame for a brand new house. We indeed came home tired every day from our worksites but were not so tired as to not enjoy daily programming, like the Kentucky History and Culture night, a Bluegrass concert, family night where the families of our worksites came to eat with us, and a free night when we chose to play games and get to know each other better. Every day was full and we learned to enjoy the simple things like heat in our cabin and food on our plate. We also learned the hardships of our Eastern Kentucky brothers and sisters who have been devastated by rural poverty and the changing labor market.

Take a minute to talk to a member of the Lancaster, KY TRIP member that you know, and see how they have been changed.