

Young People Who Care, Inc.

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Ministry to the poor in the Diocese of Erie since 1976

Participant Packet for Service Program

Dear Volunteer,

Greetings and welcome from the Service Program Staff of YPWC. We are looking forward to your participation in our Service Program. This program is designed to meet the needs of the poor and disadvantaged of Clearfield County, Appalachia while living on the grounds of Bethany Youth Retreat Center. Included in this packet is important information we ask you to read carefully. It outlines our program and includes descriptions of our philosophy and guidelines, volunteer responsibilities, and a sample schedule for you to review. If you can live this program for a weekend or a week, sign and return the last page to your Group Leader. Keep in mind that if you arrive here and are unwilling to live this program, you will be sent home earlier than your group at your expense.

Our Service Program provides a special opportunity for students to experience working on service projects to help those in need, while living in a Christian community with other students from different parts of the United States, and living a simple lifestyle. All of this is accomplished within an environment in which each person's spiritual life is encouraged to grow through times of daily morning and evening prayer as a group, and through times of personal reflection and sharing. We have established our program for students who are interested in working hard each day and who want to be active members of a Christian community learning to work together to accomplish the goals and jobs assigned to them. It is designed to challenge participants to grow in areas of leadership, discovery of one's own gifts, and in the area of spirituality. **The success of the weekend or week depends upon the attitudes and willingness of the participants to fully enter into the program with enthusiasm and cooperation. We are interested in having as volunteers only those individuals who are excited by and interested in a program such as ours.**

Program Goals

1. To meet the various needs of the people of Clearfield County.

Projects may include but not limited to: home renovation, building or repairing porches, indoor /outdoor painting of houses or apartments, working with the handicapped, assisting at our emergency shelter, visiting nursing homes and shut-ins, yard work, cleaning, work on the Retreat Center Grounds, as well as other similar services.

2. To develop Christian leadership skills and provide an experience of living in a Christian community.

Accomplished through students working with the adult leaders to assist in organizing the jobs each day, through work on the job sites and interacting with the people of the area, helping with meal preparations and clean up, assisting in daily routine tasks at the Retreat Center, planning evening prayer and reflection time.

One focus of the week is building community with each other. There will be recreational and other activities each day with this focus in mind. Exclusive relationships are a hindrance to this goal. Volunteers who come with very close friends are encouraged to spend time not only with their friends, but with others in the group.

God is Spoken of Here

Mission Statement: Young People Who Care, Inc. is a Catholic grassroots ministry.

YPWC provides a wide, ecumenical circle of care among those who give and those who receive.

Its members are committed to creating a wholistic and nonjudgmental environment where the exchange of culture, education and training empower individuals and groups.

While adapting to the changing times and needs,

prayer, hospitality, simplicity and service remain constant characteristics of Young People Who Care, Inc.

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Dating and dating behavior is not a part of this program. There are appropriate settings and times for this, but in this week the focus is on interacting with and getting to know people from your own group and other groups instead of exclusive relationships.

3. To foster spiritual growth in volunteers.

This is accomplished through daily morning and evening prayers, times of reflection and sharing, and through a simple lifestyle. Mass will be held at least once and there will be other spiritual opportunities offered throughout the week.

If you play a musical instrument such as guitar, flute, violin, etc., please bring it along. Music is a great addition to the prayer services and campfires.

Program Guidelines and Policies

- **Students must be 16 years old**, out of sophomore year and have a signed medical release form with emergency contact phone numbers.
- **All participants must have had a tetanus shot** in the past 7 years. Information given to adult leaders of any medication that is needed for the period of time in the program.
- **No smoking policy.** If you are a smoker and cannot go without a cigarette during this program, then you should not apply.
- **Living a simple lifestyle:**
This program challenges volunteers to live an alternative lifestyle. It is an opportunity to become aware of what it would be like to live without some of the luxuries, appliances, diet and conveniences that most of us are accustomed to having as part of our daily lives. We are not deprived of the necessities - just the luxuries. In order to have a brief experience of “doing without”, as well as for many practical and globally responsible reasons, our program embraces a simple lifestyle which includes:
 - **No television, radios, walk mans, mp3 or CD players, Gameboys or other portable game systems, cell phones** (except for adult leaders).
 - **Absence of soda/junk food** - we do have homemade snacks for deserts and campfires. Snacks you bring with you may be used on night of arrival or stored for your return trip.
 - **Recycling everything we can.**
 - **Limited water supply:**
This means one shower every other day if you are servicing during Spring Break. If you are servicing during the summer - this means one shower during the week. However, there is time for a swim each day in the river. The water is clean, warm and refreshing after the work day. Bring biodegradable soap and shampoo (Ivory or other brand) river shoes, and modest 1-piece bathing suits for summer programs.

Other Program Information

- Common bunk rooms for males and females in different buildings.

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- Jeans or work pants are worn on the job sites. Shorts, sweat pants, running pants or pants with holes are not work clothes. Bring work boots and gloves for construction jobs. *(See Packing List for more details)*
- The phone is a business phone and is only available for emergency use by volunteers. Group leaders need to arrange a phone tree that can be activated by one phone call.
- Illegal drug and alcohol use is strictly **FORBIDDEN**.

In order for the week to be as successful and positive as possible for everybody, any individual who causes a negative experience for others in the program through an unwillingness to follow the guidelines, disrespect to adult leaders, staff or other students, or involvement in any drug or alcohol use, will result in the person being sent home early. This would be done in cooperation with the student's parents and adult leaders.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Work Projects each day.
- Attendance at all meals, organized recreation, prayer times and other scheduled events with a positive spirit.
- Assist with meals and clean up and other chores as assigned.
- Assist in planning one evening prayer during the week.
- Follow the guidelines of the program and cooperate with those in leadership.

Our Program is for those willing to accept the challenges, responsibilities, and guidelines described above. If you wish to be a participant in this Service Program we want you to know that hundreds of high school and college students from across the US have found this Mission week to be an incredible, life-changing, exciting experience in which they have learned new skills, ministered to wonderful people, made new friends, grown closer to God, and created memories that will last them a lifetime. We welcome you and look forward to meeting you! A sample schedule will give you an idea of what a typical day will look like. **Please pay attention to the items on the packing list** (especially if you are doing service work during the summer.)

Prepare yourself for an adventure!!!

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