

2018 GWOH Experience at Jordan Lutheran, Orefield, PA

On September 9th, 2018, our Family Center became the launching pad for 55 missionaries from Jordan as we enjoyed an energized Launch Luncheon then dispersed to serve our God, our church and our community, promoting God's Work in varied capacities. Following our missions, we returned Jordan and shared our experiences. The common thread woven in each testimonial was the incredible rewards we received through the gift of sharing our time and talent.

Provided were *five mission opportunities* from which our congregation could choose. Each one being different from the other, the multiple service options provided our "missionaries" options where they felt they could effectively serve. Below are excerpts from each of the project team leaders:

1. "Our team chose the Allentown Rescue Mission, located in Allentown, PA. This is an established and valued organization offering disciplined, comprehensive and successful Christian based programs to men (and others) who have been challenged, often due to circumstances beyond their control. The ARM provides meals, lodging, education programs, self-help classes, guidance to assist with daily and basic life demands, training, employment opportunities and placement recommendations within our community followed by supportive after graduation counseling. The Allentown Rescue Mission is privately funded and receives an impressive level of support from our community to fund their worthy programs.

Upon arrival, we were given a thorough and thoughtful tour of the facilities and were enlightened as to how we could help beyond this single day of giving. This information fueled the dialogue within our group as to what Jordan's family could provide the Allentown Rescue Mission moving forward. We enthusiastically committed to developing a donation drive that would support a majority of the desserts and beverages required to serve their estimated 1,000 guests who will be attending their Benefit Spaghetti Dinner on October 20th, 2018. The Jordan drive was incredibly successful as we collected over 1,500 bottles of water, soda and ice tea, gathered 22 dozen cookies, provided several sheet cakes, prepared dozens of cupcakes and brownies and lovingly baked 32 pies! In the near future, we plan to provide a luncheon and/or dinner for the Mission guests at their facility. This God's Work. Our Hands. experience was energized through our affiliation with this loving organization. We are so blessed to have been given this opportunity to serve our community and demonstrate God's Love through Our Hands."

2. This is the excerpt from the Team Leader of our Luncheon Launch crew that provided our "missionaries" with sandwiches and salads prior to our departure to serve the community. This group also provided our after Mission snacks where we shared the experiences of that day. She writes: "It was truly great to watch this event gain momentum and take a multi-pronged approach as different members of Jordan came forward with different ideas and passions with how they could help with community outreach. When the need was spoken about for someone to coordinate a send-off luncheon and a wrap-up snack, I volunteered because of my familiarity

of coordinating meals in the kitchen for various events and programming. This was a fantastic way for not only myself to be involved but also for all of the people helping me. It allowed a range of people with varying strengths to help with the set-up, prep, serving, and breakdown and for them to work at their own pace. This self-determination of ability made the luncheon a great success as we were able to provide food and fellowship for our congregation as they went out into the community to fulfill other ministry work.”

3. And from our Blanket Brigade, our Team Leader writes: “What a wonderful experience organizing the event of making fleece tie blankets for homeless veterans of the Lehigh Valley! I had such fun choosing and purchasing the fleece to create aesthetically pleasing colors to provide warmth to the bodies and warmth to the hearts of the recipients of the blankets. I was able to purchase enough fleece for ten blankets with the \$250 I received from Thrivent for this project. It took several hours for me to prep the fleece prior to GWOH day which allowed for a smooth flow of activity the day of the event. My team was a sight to behold. Young and young at heart came together working side by side to complete our task. I used the term “working,” but it certainly didn’t appear to be “work” but rather “joy” as I took some time to stand back and observe. The conversations and interactions were truly a time of fellowship as well as a time of giving. This GWOH project was so successful that the participants wanted to make more blankets!

Two participants accompanied me to Victory House in Bethlehem, PA, where we delivered the finished blankets. The staff there was so very appreciative of our donation, and we “wowed” them with the colors of the blankets! We were so energized by their reaction that we left Victory House and drove directly to a Joann store where we bought enough fleece for three more blankets! Our church council gave us a matching \$250 dollars to continue our project. Having initially completed 10 blankets, we now have enough fleece to make twelve more fleece blankets which will be completed at October end and donated to Victory House!

4. Another Mission project encouraged the members of our congregation to become involved with the 6th Street Shelter, Allentown, PA. This respected organization has been intervening in the lives of more than 100 homeless families a year, demonstrating genuine love to those that truly need all the love then can get. This love theme includes parents as well and guides the families to embrace a stable life in which good decisions are nurtured and improved lifestyles are encouraged. From our Team Leader: “The 6th St. Shelter team consisted of 11 members ranging in ages from 9 to 70+. Our team prepared two apartments for the arrival of families in need and organized the shelter’s food pantry. We experienced firsthand what Jesus meant when he said “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) when the shelter staff expressed their appreciation and thankfulness for our help. Our experience was very rewarding and everyone wanted “to do it again” and that is our plan for the future.” It should be added that prior to the September 9th event, The Outreach Committee initiated a 6th Street Collection Drive providing a bounty of basic items any family would need when setting up a new apartment. The generosity from our congregation provided two pick-up trucks worth of essential, requested products.

5. And this final one is from our Christian Education Director who was the Team Leader for the Red Sand Project. She writes: "During the 2018 Youth Gathering in Houston, TX, our youth participated in the Red Sand Project on the campus of the University of Houston. By spreading red sand in the cracks on sidewalks and pavement, we created artwork that captured the attention of campus visitors and Houston residents alike. Our artwork opened discussions about human trafficking issues, an issue that is very relevant to Houston, but which also effects every state in our country. Our group talked about holding a Red Sand Project event when we returned to our hometown in an effort to bring the human trafficking issue to the attention of our community. The God's Work Our Hands celebration at Jordan Lutheran provided the perfect setting for us to accomplish our goal soon after returning home to Pennsylvania. Using information and data provided during our educational session during the gathering, combined with state specific information I gathered through additional research, we educated members of our GWOH group about human trafficking and shared ways to identify those who are at risk and potential ways to reduce that risk. Members of our group were surprised at many of the statistics that we shared and were eager to share information with the community. It was very rewarding to know that this event helped to shine some light on an issue that is too often hidden in plain sight. Even though it rained that day, our group cheerfully donned their rain gear and headed to a local park and playground to create our own Red Sand artwork. It is our hope to schedule another event in the spring to continue to spread information about this important issue at another local park."