

# Students expand horizons on mission trip

By Sianna Flowers  
Correspondent

It is no secret that Sisters is a bit of a haven from the “real world” — safe and sheltered from the harsh realities many face in their daily lives. Many people move to Sisters for this very reason.

But there are still plenty of opportunities to expand your horizons in Sisters, such as the outreach trip several students participated in recently. High school students Dyut Fetrow, Amanda Smith, Ashley Smith, Anna Bartlett, Serena Salisbury, Dustin Smith, Dani Rudinsky, Jordan Pollard, Cole Pade, Natalie Marshall, Danika Wagner and Galen Boles along with adults Jared Vogt, Sarah Hansen, Chris Hansen and Michelle Smith all went to Portland for five days on Vast Church’s annual “Serve Portland” trip.

Youth pastor Jared Vogt describes the activities and purpose of the trip.

“We did a work project at a struggling middle school, we manned the hospitality room of the Union Gospel Mission, where we passed out food and got to talk and pray with the homeless, and we served in their women and children’s shelter that takes in homeless and hurting moms and their kids and helps them rebuild their lives,” he said.

The students stayed at Mount Olivet Baptist Church.

The students were all deeply touched by the work they did in Portland, especially with the homeless, but it didn’t start out that way. As Vogt recalls, “Life in Sisters is so different, and at the beginning of the trip it was clear that our students were afraid of many of the people we were interacting with because they looked different and didn’t smell very good either.”

However, something shifted during the trip. The men and women who sleep on the streets of Portland went from uncomfortable misfortunates to real people

with hopes, dreams, and stories.

As senior Dani Rudinsky said, “A highlight was spending time with some homeless people just joking around with them on a very basic, very human level... At the Union Gospel Mission we also got to serve them on a basic level by just giving them food. We would each take turns sitting down with one of them to listen and to pray. They are amazingly open, and all appreciated prayer.”

But it wasn’t just the downtrodden that this trip ministered to. It also strengthened the students. The group was comprised of freshmen and seniors, boys and girls, athletes and artists. Each of them brought something different to the table but they were united by one purpose: to serve “as Jesus first served us,” as Vogt put it. This common ground strengthened relationships.

“I came home with new close friends, and have grown even closer to those I knew well that were with us. I am proud I could spend some of my senior-year spring break on that mission trip,” said Galen Boles.

Serve Portland produces notable memories, and not all of them about serving. There is also a tradition of night games like “Murder in the House” which create memories that stick with students. This pseudo-horror-movie game gets everyone screaming and laughing in the same breath and rehashing murders long past the actual crime.

As Danika Wagner recalls, “It gets pretty intense. I kind of thought I might actually get killed.” Activities like this are really the icing on the cake of the Serve Portland trip.

Serve Portland was a unique experience that brought students close to each other, strangers, and God. As Rudinsky put it “[Serving others] is a simpler task than you think, and the return is greater than you could imagine.”

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