

Hope Presbyterian Church Youth Group Mission Trip to Calais, ME.

7/2-7/9 2011

Sponsored by Youth Works.

Three adult leaders and thirteen youth from the church went on the trip. Also, the parents of three of the youth helped with the driving and combined the trip with a small vacation.

Calais Maine is up there, about 20 Miles from the most eastern part of the US and about a 14 hour ride from Lakewood NJ. Because of this distance we really needed to break the trip into 2 legs and we were extremely fortunate to have been brought into the Casco Village Church family for a night on the way up and the way back.

The trip started early in the morning on the 2nd of July, 3:30 am for some and a little later for others. We arrived at the Casco village church in the middle of the day and proceeded to set up our sleeping arrangements, tents for some and blow up mattresses in the church for others. The next morning, our new friend John cooked us breakfast in the Casco Village Church, we attended the 10 am church service and then headed off to Calais. Heading north and east the whole time the trip was uneventful and we arrived in our new world around 4:30.

Calais is a relatively small town on the brackish and tidal St Croix River directly across from St Stephen Canada. (The damn Yankees jeers from the other side were followed by "Lets go Bruins" cheers from our side but that is another story). The main industry is logging which is about 25% of what it once was and the town has fallen into a deep and probably long recession. There is not much to do, many shops and stores are closed and the entire place has the eerie feeling of a town that is fading. It is a shame since it is extremely beautiful.

Our 16 missionaries were met with about 50 others from 3 other churches in New jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut that all arrived on Sunday afternoon. This was a pretty large but well behaved teen crowd from the northeast. We were welcomed by 4 young mission leaders that served as our hosts and guides for the next five days. We were mixed with members of the other churches that night and separated into 6 groups of about 12 that we worked with, cooked with, cleaned with and otherwise hung with during our stay.

Upon arrival we were shown our sleeping quarters, small rooms – shoulder to shoulder in the Second Baptist Church for the boys and an open room for all the girls across the street in the another church's fellowship hall. Next door was the St. Annes Episcopal Church (all this on Church Street – go figure) which is a small building but an architectural wonder from the late 1800s. We attended a service there on Wednesday evening.

Our daily schedule was packed from 6:45 am until 11:15 pm with meals, mission work and faith based activities. This was all expertly coordinated by the youth works leaders, four of the most dedicated young people most of us have ever encountered.

The days started with one of the six groups making breakfast, and then we all ate. This was followed by Devotions and quiet time. Then our daily activities started.

Typical evenings included dinner, some sort of activity and then a worship service. We were then split into our individual youth groups to discuss the themes of the day.

The mission chores on Tuesday through Thursday were varied for the 6 groups. Two groups spent time working on yard and house projects. The other groups spent time helping at the animal shelter, visiting an assisted living home and talking with the residents, and also working with two separate day camps for local kids. These camps included the kids club, sponsored by Youth Works and Calais Day Camp that is sponsored by the town. At the covered dish dinner in November, the youth group will present pictures and specific stories about their experiences.

Thanks to Ken and Tammi Beyer for helping with the driving and to Cathie Strauss for helping on the way home.

Thanks to all from the Casco Village Church for all of their help and making us feel at home.

A special thanks to John and Wanda who cooked 2 meals for us and opened their yard and facilities to us on our return trip as there was no room at the inn (the church was preparing for its yearly flea market the next day and was in no shape to handle a bunch of tired missionaries since all hands were hard at work and all floor space was taken by the myriad of items for the flea market)

John & Peggy Wuestneck

Mission trip participants: Peggy Wuestneck, John Wuestneck, Kathy Johnson

Kaileigh Allen	Samantha Blake	Savannah Beyer	Eric Beyer	Thomas Beyer
Allen Blythe	Courtney Crawford	Teddi Hayes	Avianna Johnson	Sarah Strauss
Rider Szolkowski	Alex Wuestneck	TJ Wuestneck		

Thank you to all the friends and family of Hope Church who supported our mission trip to Maine.