

Jordyn Glantz

Going to Oklahoma with Jteen was definitely a different experience than what I was expecting. I decided to go on the trip because I had never done a service trip before and when I heard about it, it seemed like a really good way to give back to a community that needed some support.

I knew going on this trip the different projects and activities we would be doing but I didn't know the impact they would have on me. For instance, our first day at Habitat For Humanity we were able to meet the owner of the house we were working on. It had been destroyed by the tornado that occurred over a year ago. She was so thankful for everything we were doing because before Habitat she never thought that she would be able to return to her house again. She was hugging all of us and it just made the whole experience more worthwhile. Then, on Sunday, we worked on another Habitat house. This house had not been hurt by the tornado but had been depending on Habitat before the tornado hit the area. Unfortunately, there was such an overwhelming immediate need that they, along with others, were put on hold because of tornado relief. So, it was really great to be working on this house because we were able to help a family who had been so close to living in their house.

On Friday, we had the opportunity to hear a man tell his parent's story of the Holocaust. I've heard many stories but this one was like no other. The amount of miracles that his parents encountered was more than I even knew possible. They got help from Christian supporters and then once they were sent to camps they eventually got separated. But, after being separated for a few years, they were able to find their way back to each other. However, the biggest miracle of all was that he found his mother's brother. She had been so sure that her brother was dead because someone had told her that he had been taken away. After 40 years, they were able to reunite. Now, if that's not a miracle, I don't know what is.

Saturday we didn't do service work since it was Shabbat, but the day definitely still had impact. We walked over to the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial. There, we were able to hear the story of Sara Sweet, a woman who lost her father from the tragedy. You can probably guess that she has told her story many times especially to groups such as ours at the Memorial. But you could still see her getting emotional while she was telling the story. I can only imagine how hard it must've been for her and then to retell it again and again. But I understand that she wants people to know the impact of one man on many lives even the ones who weren't at the building that day. She told us that it was one of those things that you never think could happen to you so when it does it is so surreal that it can be almost impossible for one to believe. It's hard to believe that a member of your family would not be coming home for dinner. Part of the memorial are chairs, each inscribed with a name of someone who died there that day. The chairs symbolize the empty chairs at the kitchen table at meals. Then, we were able to go back to the memorial on Sunday night. Seeing the chairs all lit up and hearing the sounds of the pool in the memorial was very moving. The pool water represents the sound of the rain that happened later on the day of the

Jordyn Glantz

bombing. The memorial was rather empty at night, which made it quieter and easier to hear the sound. But there were still a few people wandering around, maybe family, memorializing their loved ones.

On Sunday we had the privilege of going to the St. James Loving Baptist Church. Going there and being a part of their service was great. Everyone was so welcoming and happy to have us there; they even clapped for us when we had to leave early. I had never been to a church service before so it was another new experience for me. The next day, Monday, was our last day. Using the time before we had to go to the airport we went to The Jesus House, a homeless shelter. It is located in a poverty stricken part of Oklahoma. They have a food pantry, which we helped at and where they give any people who need in the area food. Then, we were able to ask questions and get a tour of the shelter. It is a place where people with serious addiction problems go to heal and stop their addiction. At the Jesus House everyone who stays there must work to pay for his or her stay. After a certain amount of time and if they feel that they are ready, the people may leave and go back into their lives, but addiction free of course. For me being there was a reminder that there are many people who are not fortunate enough to put food on their table so they have to go to places like the Jesus House to get food for themselves and their family. Second, it showed me the impact that drugs and alcohol can have on people. There is nothing good that can come from drugs and addiction. Some of these people, once they were sucked in, thought that they could never go back and they felt so fortunate to have found a place that gave them a second chance in life.

Overall, going to Oklahoma had a very big impact on me. I experienced many new things and met many new people. It opened my eyes, not only to a different part of the country, but also to a different world. Now, as I look around in my life, I will see more clearly the differences in people around me. This was definitely a trip that I will never forget.