

Appalachia Service Project 2007

2007 Theme: "You Are the Salt of the Earth (Matt 5:13)"

Merry Christmas to the 2007 ASP Mission Team! It may seem odd to be getting ASP mail 7 months before our trip, but we've got a lot to do between now and July. Watch your mailbox for lots of exciting ASP correspondence during that time! We'll be kicking off the new year and our ASP preparation season on the evening of January 5th. It is indeed exciting to be embarked upon this process again. I hope the rest of you are as excited as I am.

For anyone who hasn't heard (and I think most of you haven't, because we only got confirmation a little over a week ago), we're official. We've been accepted by ASP for 2007, and scheduled for ASP's summer week 5, which (with our travel time included) makes our dates July 7 - 15. Our tentative center location is Carter County, Tennessee, a new location for us. Carter County is most famous within ASP as the location of Johnson City (affectionately referred to as "JC"), where ASP's administrative headquarters is. We don't know where in the county we'll be staying or working yet, but we'll definitely be closer to a city than we usually are.

One of our first orders of business is getting our counts firmed up, now that we actually know our week and people can plan. We applied for 63 people and we currently have a waiting list of 8. This was our first-choice week, so I believe that should minimize conflicts. But, please go back to your calendar and make sure. If something has come up, please let me know as soon as possible. (Also, I had some trouble with email for a few weeks there, so if you've already sent something to me and didn't hear anything back, please sent it again.) If there are even questions/issues, please let a group leader know, so we know where we stand. Being honest up front may allow someone from our waiting list to go, or if our group shrinks, it may allow someone from another group's waiting list to go. It also reduces the amount of money, van space, first aid kits and 20 other things we need. We need to have a firm count in to ASP by Feb 1, but I'd like to nail it down internally before that. The group leaders will be checking with you.

On the flip side, if this date works for you, great! Take a deep breath, and make sure that you are really willing to commit to not only spending a week in service, but spending a lot of time this spring fund-raising, training, and generally getting ready. If you're not, this is the time to say so. If you are, then mark your calendar – you are hereby officially busy from July 7 to 15. Then, get out your work clothes and get ready to start getting dirty.

We still need one more adult group leader for the trip. We're looking for someone first and foremost who enjoys working with youth, is patient and good at explaining things, and who maybe has a bit of experience building/repairing things. Where might a good nominee come from? You! Ask yourself if you'd want to be in their work crew for a week. If the answer is yes, and they're interested, have them contact me (jmo4470@aol.com/508-393-4470).

Our biggest task over the next few months is fundraising. With a group of 63 people, we need to raise almost \$40,000 dollars to finance the trip. I know I say this every year, but as this is the largest group we've ever had, this is also the biggest fund-raising target we've ever had. For comparison, we raised about \$36,000 last year. Historically, we have managed to raise enough money every year but one to cover the cost of the trip without participants having to pay anything out of their own pockets. However, money is still tight this year around the church, and this is a big target, so we may have a harder time than usual. That makes it important that we hit those fund-raisers that we've got early hard, so we don't wind up short at the end. The good news is that we got an earlier start this year than ever before. With the pie baking and leaf raking fundraisers in November, we made over \$2000. Thanks to all who helped make the first attempt

at both of those successful, and we're already thinking about how to make them more successful for next year.

As we talked about during the application process, we have created minimum guidelines for fundraising, to make sure that everyone contributes a fair piece to a large pie. We need everyone to be responsible for raising (either directly contributing, or by working at the various fundraisers) \$425, and putting in at least 13 hours in group fundraising activities. (Note that this is a minimum – we need to raise more than that!) Even if you didn't do the fall fundraisers, trust me, there will be plenty of opportunities throughout the spring – Can Redemption, Rock-A-Thon, Easter Breakfast, Rummage Sale, Car Wash, Silent Auction, and Spaghetti Dinner and Talent Show come to mind off the bat. The point is not to beat on people for money, but to make sure everyone realizes that we need to raise a serious chunk of change and commits to work towards that. We'll be in a world of hurt if July rolls around and we're looking under the couch cushions in the youth room for a few thousand dollars!

Finally, between now and July, we have a lot of preparation to do – getting ourselves ready as a group and as individuals for what we're going to do this summer. This covers everything from practice working together, to what to pack, to how to use a hammer or circular saw, to how we should treat people we meet, to why are we doing this anyway? It is important that everyone participate in the preparation sessions fully, the most important being the preparation retreat in May. I'll do my best to be flexible and make things work, but no volunteer will go to ASP without participation in the prep retreat or an appropriate make-up session.

The process of preparation has already begun. It started when each of you started thinking and praying about whether spending a week working for others through ASP was something you wanted to do. It continued through the informational meetings, and our first large group gathering to fill out the application. Our next step is a large group gathering on Friday, Jan 5, from 6-8 pm in Webb Hall at the church. Call it an ASP party! I recognize that the time is a little odd, but we're trying to make it possible to get the whole group together, which includes our college students who will start heading back to school shortly after that. Our time together will include dinner, group-building activities (you've got 62 other people to get to know!), and planning our fundraisers for the spring. It is expected that all participants will attend.

ASP is not just a week of work in the summer (although it certainly is that!), but also a journey, on several different levels. Obviously, we will travel the better part of a thousand miles each way to reach Carter County. We will also all travel through a long process over the next few months of fund-raising and preparation. Finally, there is a very personal journey each one of us makes, as we hear God's call to service and decide how to respond to it. Through it all, we have each other. We start the next phase on January 5. See you there.

- Jonathan

Looking for more ASP information? What do you do if you lose this letter? You can find everything you need to know: calendars, forms, pictures, and more, in the volunteers-only section of our ASP website - www.firststumchurch.com/asp/asp.html.