

## What I Did This Summer

Christine Gryczan - The Georgia Bulletin - 09/23/2004

I spent a week of my summer on a mission trip with my church, attending Catholic Heart Work Camp for the second year in a row.

Since I was a “veteran” of last year’s camp at Mobile, Ala., I knew what to expect on this year’s trip to Orlando, Fla. I knew it would make a big difference in my life.

Catholic Heart Work Camp was started in 1993 by Steve and Lisa Walker, who wanted to help teens grow in their faith by helping to serve others in the community.

Their goal was to have a Catholic Heart Work Camp in every state of the United States, plus a bonus camp in Jamaica. Parishioners from all over the United States travel to a city for a week full of God and hard work. The first CHWC had only 100 participants, but as of 2003, they had over 7,000.

My church group left on a Sunday morning around 4 a.m. We traveled on our church bus to Orlando, which took about eight hours.

After we checked in, I was able to meet the group that I’d be working with for the week.

I was in a group of seven kids, five from Florida and two from Georgia, including me. To my surprise, the old youth minister at my church was my leader! Even more coincidental, the other kid from Georgia went to my high school but goes to a different church.

My group was assigned to work on a house for an elderly man and his family. We were partnered with Paint the Town, an organization in Orlando that works to give people in houses who couldn’t afford to tidy up their exterior a chance to paint their house. My group never actually got to meet our resident, but we did spend the time with his family, who were incredibly grateful for all the work we did. On just the first day we got the entire front of the house painted! When we were done, we had finished the entire exterior of the house, and the feeling I had when we were done was truly amazing.

We worked all week, through the extreme Florida heat and the random downpours of rain we seemed to get every day. My group never gave up, because we were number one! (Actually, we really were number one—that was our group number).

I remember the night my parish presented our skit, which was about a girl and how she went through the many nails of her life, such as anger, jealousy and illicit sex—things that teens have to deal with every day. We received a standing ovation from the kids, which really showed me how God worked in many ways on this trip. I saw that our skit really made these kids realize that several things in their lives need to be changed.

CHWC was truly an uplifting experience for me again. I was able to grow more in my faith and see the ways that God works through teens. CHWC does not require a person to be Catholic to go, so teens should find a church with teens that go to a camp and sign up for it. I was able to make so many good friends that I still keep in touch with today through the Internet. This experience was truly amazing, and I cannot wait until the summer of 2005!

Christine Gryczan

Junior, Roswell High School

Member of St. Andrew Church,  
Roswell