

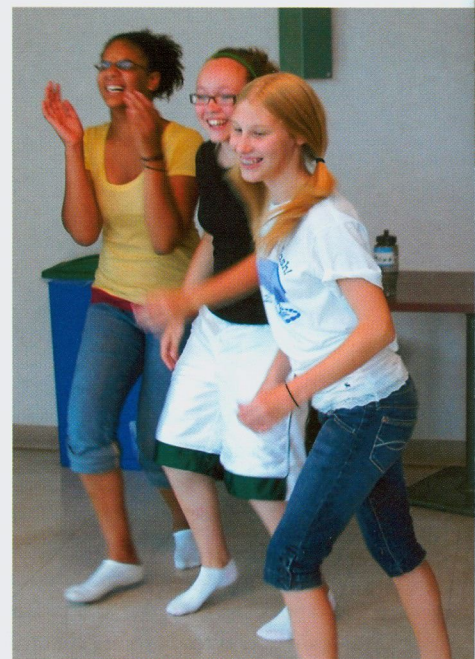
Urban Retreat Reflections

Faith requires working for justice

DURING four very hot days in August, eight Basilica 7th, 8th and 9th graders participated in an Urban Immersion Retreat, a program of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches. Not only did they work hard at serving folks in our city, they also learned very difficult facts regarding systemic injustices that keep people poor, hungry and impoverished. They learned about facing complicated choices such as deciding between health insurance and reliable transportation. They learned about the uneven distribution of wealth. And, most importantly, they learned that their faith not only calls them to do something about injustice, it requires them to do so.

“I was moved, changed, inspired, privileged and thrilled to witness the young people’s faith, their authentic love for others and their genuine concern for people who suffer,” comments Kelli Kester. “The retreat experience profoundly impacted them, too, as evidenced in these reflections.” ✚

Kelli Kester is the coordinator of learning for youth and young adults at The Basilica.



I have realized that there are a lot of things people can do to help people in need. Not everyone has a nice car or a nice home to have a nice meal in. We were there for a reason, to help people in need and make them feel loved.

— Ellen Kester, Grade 7

During the retreat I saw people facing poverty and I thought about what it would be like if I was facing poverty. I was wondering why more people don’t try to help the problem. I am going to volunteer to help.

— John Mitchell, Grade 8

By **Kelli Kester**



(Left) Students take a break while cleaning shelves at Goodwill Industries. (Below) The entire crew plus chaperone Ann Mitchell at a north side National Night Out picnic.

I learned many things about poverty and homelessness on the retreat. I think that I will practice my smiles more often and appreciate things that I took for granted before. It also made me want to teach those who are wealthy about poverty and what they can do to help those in need. This retreat has opened my eyes to new and sad realities of life and is motivating me to want to change them.

— Alexandra Nicome, Grade 8

It was great, all of it. We had fun weeding an older woman's garden, working at the Goodwill store, eating churros at the mercado and going to the block party in the neighborhood where Kelli lives. I would definitely do it again.

— Jacob Rasmussen, Grade 7

We learned a lot about the world's poverty and how our behavior can affect the environment. I heard how doing little things, such as using reusable water bottles rather than plastic disposable water bottles, actually makes a huge difference.

— Tessa Ruf, Grade 7



During the retreat I saw a lot of love at the House of Charities, a place we went for dinner. There was such a friendly atmosphere. I sat down with a guy named Tom and I talked to him. He was very nice. I have not personally experienced not having enough food to eat, but I realize it can happen to anyone. God has called me to help the world be a better, safer and more fair place to live by regularly volunteering, getting to know people outside of my immediate group of friends, and focusing on the similarities between people and cultures rather than the differences.

— Samuel Ruff, Grade 7

On the retreat I learned many valuable things. We learned how hard it is to raise a family. We also learned that "poor people" may not actually be homeless — they could just be low on money. I had a blast helping many people and getting to meet new people from not just my community but other communities as well. I had so much fun and want to do it next year, too.

— Kendra Shannon, Grade 9