

Apply now for life-changing experience next summer

Each year, the Missions Office offers a limited number of students the chance to volunteer for one week at a summer camp – in another country.

Often they go to Haiti; last year they went to El Salvador.

Chaperoned by youth ministers, the high school and college students teach Bible stories and arts and crafts, supervise outdoor activities and help children work on their English.

And teens can rest assured – the Good Samaritan School in Haiti where they will stay this year has the Internet. It offers simple but clean, comfortable and safe accommodations.

“It’s a wonderful chance to share their missionary spirit, to share the work of their baptismal mission,” said Agnes Supernavage, project assistant for the Baltimore-Haiti Project.

Deacon Rodrigue Mortel, M.D., director of the Missions Office, noted that past participants came home with a broadened perspective after exposure to another culture.

Jacob Barron from Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Ellicott City, decided to go last year because his sister had gone in 2003 and had had a wonderful experience.

When he arrived, Mr. Barron was surprised how warm and welcoming the country was.

“Once I learned that I was going, I think I let my concerns get the best of me and I got worried about all these thing that I’ve heard about ... and all the dangers that go along with a nation as poor as Haiti. After arriving though, I don’t think there was much to be scared of. I didn’t think it was at all dangerous.”

But he was shocked by the depth of the poverty.

“Poverty is rampant and grimly visible throughout the country. I don’t think I could have imagined the poverty ... it was everywhere you looked really.”

He was deeply affected by the generosity of spirit among the people. “They’re poorer than any of us could imagine but still spirited and gentle and good-natured,” Mr. Barron said. “They have so little there and were so much happier than I thought possible ... Haiti made me realize that I should seek to be grateful to be alive. It taught me that happiness, comfort and those things depend more on our state of mind than on our circumstances. It made me want to help more.”

Meghan Cosgrove, a youth minister at The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Homeland, and a teacher at Father Charles Hall School, Baltimore, chaperoned the group. “It was culture shock at first,” she said, but added, “the [Haitian] students were so eager to learn many things as well as teach us Creole and things from their culture.” She was impressed at how much the group was able to accomplish with the children in just a week.

This year, students will go for one week in July. Students, who must be 16 or older, pay for their own airfare, but all other costs will be covered by the archdiocese.

Space is limited, so students should apply early. They must complete an application, write an essay and be interviewed. The deadline for applications is April 15, but students should apply for a passport immediately if they don’t have one.

For more information or to obtain an application, visit the Baltimore-Haiti Project Web site at www.baltimorehaiti.org or call the Missions Office at 410-547-5498.