

From the Notebook: Justice Action Week participants speak

The 31 teenagers who participated in the annual Justice Action Week had quite a bit to say about their experience.

Rather than letting those recollections never see the light of day, we've decided to use www.catholicreview.org to share more of their thoughts about working with the often-overlooked people in Baltimore City.

Program Director Ted Miles on how Justice Action Week fits into Catholic social teaching:

"What I see happening in this program is forming people how to live it. Our faith is indeed a social faith. These are people ultimately who our faith tradition calls us to be in companionship with and to journey along with. So much of what our church has done with that is kept a secret. I think this helps to break open a wider view of faith. It gives them a sense that our faith is so deeply personal. That happens with the relationships they develop throughout the week."

Jill Mardesich, 15, St. John the Evangelist in Severna Park and Archbishop Spalding High School, on JAW and working in a soup kitchen.

"I actually had three friends that went last year and they told me 'Oh my gosh, you have to go.' I had my first experience in a soup kitchen and I'm the only kid here who's never been in one before. It's amazing how much love these people have and how happy they are. I asked how one man how he was and he said, 'I'm blessed.' It was amazing."

Ryan Snyder, Ss. Peter and Paul parish and Bishop Walsh School in Cumberland, on the eye-opening experience of working in Baltimore:

"We have our problems (in Western Maryland), but the problems here are on a much larger scale. We only have a few homeless people. I'm really much more thankful for what I have. I have a pretty big yard. When you're here, you really can't walk

around.”

Corrine Molz, 17, Our Lady of the Fields in Millersville and Archbishop Spalding High School, on working with people with disabilities:

“They’re so sweet, but in the beginning I didn’t know how to react because one woman didn’t know how to speak very well. I wanted to say ‘hi’ to her, but I didn’t know what she was saying to me. It was hard in the beginning, but once we got into it, we got to know them more. It’s harder than just saying, ‘I’m going to do justice!’”

Sean Comber, 18, St. Pius X in Rodgers Forge and Loyola Blakefield, on how JAW changed his perspective on Baltimore:

“It’s seeing the city not necessarily in the light the public sees it, beyond what the media broadcasts, and it’s showing some great parts and not-so-great parts of the city. It’s showing what people are doing to make the city better. It’s showing how people who are truly in love with the city are working very hard to make the city a better place.”

Molly McComiskey, 16, St. Mark’s in Fallston and John Carroll School, on how JAW altered her perceptions:

“Just seeing the life in Baltimore is so eye-opening. I definitely judge a lot, but this taught me to be a better person and to not think about them that way until I’ve walked in their shoes. I knew what I was getting myself into, but I didn’t know how tough it would be and to listen and understand their feelings. It gave a true insight into their lives. I’ll appreciate what I have and not judge people”

Sean Huang, Church of the Resurrection in Ellicott City, on what brought him to JAW:

“Last year, I went to High-Li (the archdiocese’s High School Leadership Institute) and that was more like a leadership camp. This year, I can do more activity-based camps. I thought it would be a good compliment. High-Li gave you a lot of interpersonal, social and leadership skills. It just made you a ready and active person, so once you come to JAW, you want to put yourself out there and do something.”