

# Towson students gain on Virginia service trip

*Editor's note: The following is adapted from a blog maintained by Evan Zimmer, a rising junior at Calvert Hall College High School and student photo intern for The Catholic Review.*

Calvert Hall College and Notre Dame Preparatory School students left the comforts of home July 24, ready to learn lessons on construction, teamwork and life as they traveled four hours to build the 37th home sponsored by Habitat of the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

The eight Calvert Hall and nine Notre Dame Prep students arrived the afternoon of July 24 to Franktown Methodist Church in Franktown, Va., where they were welcomed by the associate pastor, Peter Surran.

When Monday morning came around, everyone was eager to begin work. At the house in Belle Haven, a small group of Calvert Hall students assembled some framework for smaller walls and a couple Notre Dame Prep students learned to guide electrical wiring to where the electricians were placing outlets. Pairs of students also took turns mounting "F-Channel" around the outside of the house.

Tuesday was a busy day, which started with clipping soffit to be mounted around the house. Students formed small groups in which one person would measure and trace squares to be cut by another person with a pair of clippers. A group of three students assembled the front porch stairs under the guidance of Glenn Suiter, site supervisor. Students received a cook-out style lunch by Suiter, construction coordinator Greg Stone and construction supervisor Walter Tomlinson.

Later, students had the opportunity to learn about the migrant worker population through an organization known as Telamon. The Telamon group offers human services to farmworkers, children of low-income families and people with special needs.

Later that evening, a group of students nervously made their way to a migrant

worker housing camp, in hopes to see what a camp looks like. Roberto, one of the Americorps volunteers, was able to translate for the group of students as well as seek permission to view the inside of the housing. Roberto took the students into a section of the housing camp in which he lived in as a child. The room was small, dark, hot and smelled terribly. The floor was made of cement; there was no refrigeration and no bathroom in sight. Blankets served as doors to divide the room because four families were housed in this one small space.

Roberto led the students to an area where men and older children were playing soccer. A group of five men welcomed the students to kick a ball with them, resulting in a small soccer game.

Wednesday, the group started installing the roof on the front porch which created much-needed shade from the sun. Students also assembled railings and spindles around the porch. A small group of Notre Dame Prep students, who called themselves the “crawl space crew,” gathered below the house to continue running plumbing throughout the house.

Thursday evening contained a wonderful meal provided by Franktown Methodist Church and a small ceremony. One of the most touching moments of the week was when Katie Corbett and Rachel Bolte of Notre Dame Prep presented housewarming gifts to the future homeowner, Danielle Harmon, who started to cry.

During the final reflection of the week Calvert Hall student Jon Young said his favorite part was “making new friends and seeing progress on the house.” Notre Dame’s Julia Bellantoni talked about how injustice doesn’t become personal until you see it firsthand. After witnessing the injustice in the migrant worker camp, she would like to learn more and find ways to help farm workers on the Eastern Shore.