Trip Overview

Activity: Community-Based Learning

Offered by the Center for Public Service (CPS), participants of this program will learn about and participate in direct service and advocacy work as they assist people who are homeless and/or hungry in the nation's capital. Participants will gain additional information from visits to organizations such as the National Coalition for the Homeless, congressional and federal offices, and through discussions with resource people.

The central experience will be volunteering with N. Street Village and participating in a Homeless Challenge. The DC experience can be easily tied back to your Gettysburg experience, comparing rural and urban poverty through participation in programs such as DC Outfitters, Adams County Shelter for the Homeless and the Gettysburg College Campus Kitchen.

General Schedule:

Wednesday, August 17
- Move into your residence hall (no planned Ascent activities)

Thursday, August 18
- Ascent Registration
- Family welcome luncheon
- Farewell to families following lunch
- Workshops on campus and group Ascent dinner

Friday, August 19
- Breakfast in Gettysburg’s dining hall
- Depart for Washington, D.C.
- Check in at the hostel
- Service projects and reflection

Saturday, August 20
- Organization visits

Sunday, August 21
- Homelessness Challenge

Monday, August 22
- Homelessness Challenge

Tuesday, August 23
- Organization visits
- Return to campus
- Ascent Celebration BBQ

Wednesday, August 24
- Gettysburg College First Year Orientation begins
About the Site: Washington DC, the capitol of the United States, is home to beautiful architecture and monuments, amazing museums, and historic government buildings. It is the home of 650,000 people, 1% of whom are homeless on any given night. Participants will be working with Luther Place Memorial Church, home to many services addressing homelessness in DC. The Village's housing programs serve approximately 2500 women per year. Throughout the stay, participants will also serve at various food kitchens in DC. Participants will gain additional information from visits to organizations such as the National Coalition for the Homeless, congressional offices, and through discussions with current and formerly homeless people.

The Homeless Challenge: During the Homeless Challenge, participants will spend 48 hours on the streets of DC living the life of a homeless person. Participants will have a guide that will help them find a place to sleep, and will watch over them as they sleep. Participants will be encouraged to panhandle, or beg for money.

The reason people participate in the Homeless Challenge is that it allows them to briefly view the world through the eyes of a homeless person. It can be a serious, sobering and very helpful experience, which some participants have found to be life-altering. The Homeless Challenge is facilitated by the National Coalition for the Homeless, who has organized challenges for thousands of people over the past 25 years. In that time, no one has been hurt doing the challenge.

Group Size: The trip consists of two or three student leaders from the Center for Public Service and 6-8 first year participants.

Accommodations: You will move into your residence hall on Wednesday, and can either spend the night in your room or with your parents. On Thursday night you will sleep in your new residence hall. Participants will be staying at the hostel at Luther Place Memorial Church. The Hostel provides twenty single beds in one large room; separate bathrooms and quilts and pillows for the beds (guests must bring own sheets, pillowcases, and towels).

Meals: Before trips depart, all participants will enjoy a family reception luncheon on Thursday, a group dinner on Thursday night, and breakfast in Gettysburg College’s dining hall Friday morning. During the trip, participants will prepare meals using the hostel’s kitchen with the allocated food budget. Once we return there will be a celebration barbecue on campus for all Ascent participants.

Weather: The weather can be variable during this time of year, but plan for average temperatures in the mid 80’s during the day and low 70’s at night. Please bring the recommended clothing to layer and protect yourself from the elements regardless of conditions.

Packing: Students should pack comfortable clothing and shoes for city walking, Nightwear/pajamas (will be mixed-gender in the hostel), toiletries, Washcloth / towel / shower shoes, and Daypack (small backpack). Students should also bring old, worn clothes to wear during the Homeless Challenge, both to try to look the part and because the clothes will get dirty.

Communication & Emergencies: The staff will carry a cell phone in the event of an emergency, however we will not completely rely on the service, and the group needs to know they may be without communication at times. We develop contingencies and have specific information for emergencies, but we are also aware that based on location and access it may take time to contact or reach definitive medical care, should the need arise. Although participants are permitted to carry phones, most choose to leave technology behind to more fully immerse themselves in the experience.

Health and Medical & Release of Liability: Each participant is asked to fill out a Health and Medical form for this trip. We request that you are truthful with your medical information and speak with your GRAB staff facilitator about any concerns or pre-existing conditions. In addition, we want to inform you that you will be asked to sign our indemnity form, and that you are aware that all Gettysburg College policies and procedures apply to this trip. For the Homeless Challenge, NCH assumes no responsibility or liability for any participants and no liability insurance is provided by NCH for this activity. Participants take the Homeless Challenge at their own risk

Medical Kit and Medicine: It is our top priority to mitigate risk on these experiences, but we need your assistance to inform us about your background, so we can properly prepare together. While in the field, we carry a medical and trauma kit. The medical kit has basic bandaging and wound care items, whereas our trauma kit has basic splinting and medicines such as aspirin, anti-diarrheal, epinephrine, Benadryl. We ask that you have with you your prescription medicine that you need on a daily/weekly basis, and that you transport it in its original container/bottle with your name and dosage. It is your responsibility to manage your own medication. For those with strong allergies that require medication, it is very important that you bring extra epinephrine or necessary medication in the event that yours becomes lost or broken.