



# OYMT REVIEW

## Call(ed) To Action

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'"

Isaiah 6:8



To show our appreciation to our stockholders and supporters who helped make the Orthodox Youth Mission Team ASP trip to Kentucky possible this past July, we cordially invite you to join one of our appreciation events and enjoy some delicious homemade food.

You'll see a slideshow of our trip and hear from the members of our team about the amazing experiences we had on our mission trip.

**We hope you can make it!**

If you cannot attend, please view our photo album at [www.oymt.info](http://www.oymt.info), or Facebook/ Instagram @oymt1, and on our new YouTube channel!

## Stockholder Appreciation Events

Presentations will be held at the following parishes after liturgy:

### **Sunday Sept. 29**

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church  
74 Joes Hill Road  
Danbury, CT 06811

### **Sunday Oct. 6**

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church  
46 Seymour Street  
Yonkers, NY 10701

### **Sunday Oct.13**

St. John's Orthodox Church  
364 Mill Hill Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06610

### **Sunday Oct. 20**

St. Barbara  
Greek Orthodox Church  
480 Racebrook Road  
Orange, CT 06477

*All are welcome!*

# One Big Week In Kentucky!

This year the Orthodox Youth Mission Team (OYMT) led by Fr. Luke Mihaly of Holy Trinity in Danbury, CT filled an entire Appalachian Service Project (ASP) center in Barbourville, KY. Our group of 75 youth and adult leaders was comprised of team members from CT, NY, AL, MD, CA, FL, KY and TX--11 parishes in all from 3 jurisdictions: American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese, The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and the Orthodox Church in America. We were very happy to have Fr. Nicholas Hadzellis accompany his team from St. Demetrios in Fort Worth, TX and also to have a visit from Fr. Demtrios Andrews, Executive Director of Project Mexico. It was truly a unique opportunity for Orthodox high school and college youth to come together across multiple jurisdictions to serve Christ in a mission experience.

Our team assisted 8 families. Porches were built, underpinning and insulation added, walls and ceilings painted, bathrooms and floors installed, drainage ditches dug and other work done--all with the goal of making homes "warmer, safer and drier," which is ASP's mission. Even more important than the construction work, however, was the chance to bring hope to the families we served by sharing the love of Christ with them. We also blessed two of the homes and presented each family with an icon. In addition to the construction work, the team participated in many social, cultural and devotional activities at the center. After a week of hard work, the team enjoyed some fun and fellowship Graves Mountain Lodge in Virginia. We were blessed to be able to bookend our trip with visits to two other parishes. On the way down we celebrated Divine Liturgy at the parish of Christ the Savior with Fr. Stephen Mathewes, and his parishioners and on the way home we joined the parish of St. Catherine's Orthodox Church in Hagerstown, MD with Fr. Gregory Safchuk who filled in for Fr. Dennis Buck. We received a very warm welcome and exceedingly gracious hospitality at both parishes.

OYMT also helped train to other parishes from NJ and NC who participated in an ASP week earlier in July. In total, about 100 Orthodox Christians served this summer.

This is OYMT's 9th year and we are grateful to our Lord for this amazing opportunity to make Him present by serving others and to all of you for your prayers and ongoing support.

## Special Thanks to our Generous Team Godparents:

**Lorraine Fedyna**  
**Michael and Dori Kuziak**  
**Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa**  
**Doug and Elaine Trainor**

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## Reflections

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**Kallista Berner**—This was my second year at ASP and I had an amazing time. There was one moment specifically that stood out to me. On Friday, the last day at the worksite, all the crews gave the children a bag full of books, toys, Legos, etc. Throughout the week we noticed that their single mom, our homeowner, (who wasn't their biological mom but took the children under her wings) was a bit strict and didn't allow them to have very much fun. The youngest boy at the house who is about five, reached his hand into the bag and immediately grabbed a teddy bear. The smile on his face was overwhelming and brought tears to my eyes. He didn't let go of the teddy bear for the rest of the afternoon and his smile never faded. This moment was so impactful to me because it made me think of when my siblings and I were growing up and how blessed we were to be given a life full of love, fun and happiness. His smile hasn't left my mind since, and it never will. This young boy will stick with me forever and keep me humble and grounded as I go through life. He truly taught me that even through difficult times, you can make something small into something huge. Even though the teddy bear may have just been a small stuffed animal, it made his day and possibly his week. In short, these sort of experiences and moments change my life and I'm so grateful for this experience.

**Luke Berner**—My second year of ASP was truly special. Every year I look forward to doing Christ's work and bringing peace to the families in Appalachia. Our mission was to bring the Gospel and Christ's good news to the families we served. Throughout this week it has been a joy helping the family, but more importantly building a relationship and getting to know them better. During the week I could see Christ in them, and hopefully they could see Christ in us. As the week went on, our relationships grew. In Matthew 18:20, Christ says, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." This week we developed a community with our family as we all gathered together, and Christ was present. Overall this week was truly a blessing and I couldn't be more thankful for this opportunity.

**John Dalakas**—All around I really liked the trip and the people I met on it. Our family was so nice and were very grateful. I hope next year will just as fun.

**Ana DeBassio**—My first year of OYMT was an amazing experience. It felt so good to give help to

people who aren't able to help themselves. My group and I made a great connection with our family and were even able to each lunch with them every day on their porch which they loved. On the last day they looked at everything we had done. They were so grateful and had the biggest smiles on their faces. Throughout the week, I learned so many things and made many new friendships with people that I'll continue to keep in contact with. The trip has changed my perspective on many things, including how fortunate I am. I will never forget this experience and can't wait to participate again.

**Adrian Guerrero**—There are many amazing things that come with this trip, most of which were the reasons I came back for my second year at ASP. Seeing how we can change people's lives, to help bring them closer to God and serve them for five days and getting to know them, and not simply define them by their situation is amazing. One moment that had a major impact on me came when I found out my homeowners' children were ones she took in because their real parents were drug addicts and she didn't want them being in that environment, especially after one of them unfortunately died shortly before the three were taken in. That really showed me that it's a hard life she lives, raising three children after she was just done with taking care of two of her own, that have moved out on their own. You would have to be almost a saint to push through and do it all again simply for the benefit of others. This was another great year and I hope to come back again next year.

**Nataly Guerrero**—This week, it felt really nice to help people and make new friends on this trip. I really liked my work crew because we were all working together and got the job done. Knowing how these people were living it made me realize that I should be more appreciative of what I have. This trip really opened my eye to not take things for granted.

**Sophia Hathaway**-- Not only did I make new friends with people in my group but I also able to create a relationship with my family. My family had many people living in one tiny, narrow trailer, and it was very sad to see how my life is compared to theirs. I had a very strong relationship with one of the little girls in the house. She was always asking to help me paint or put the floors in her new kitchen. She was so happy to be able to help out and told everyone in her family that she helped put in the floor. This was a very joyful moment to see because the little girl was really shy and watched TV a lot so I was glad that she was having fun. This was an experience that I will never forget and I'm glad I was able to be a part of ASP.

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# Reflections

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**Anna Kattis**-- This trip was a real eye opener to me. The people I worked with showed me a completely different lifestyle. I'm used to living in a wealthy state and everything being "perfect" but this made me realize that not everyone is like this. The people that lived in the house I worked at were the most positive and cheerful people. They did not live in the best neighborhood, but they made the best out of it and really just lived life to the fullest. This impacted my life so much because it made me see that not everyone has it as lucky as I do, yet they still are making the best life out of it.

**Olivia Kittleman**-- This past week is one that I know I won't forget. I met so many new and amazing people from all over the country who I hope to keep in touch with and see again. I was able to bond with people from my church and get really close with all of them. Knowing that I was able to make an impact at my worksite brings me so much joy. My family was an older couple in their 70's and they were so nice and welcoming to us. Every afternoon they would let us sit on their porch with them and we would all eat lunch together. I was able to find out a lot about Betty, the wife, and seeing what experiences they have gone through and how much faith they have is incredible. It was hard for me to put myself in their footsteps, but after hearing about some of the experiences they've gone through, it is just so amazing to see that no matter what financial situation you're in, having faith in God and hope can change your perspective on life and what we think are necessities. This week has been amazing, and I can't wait to come back again next year!

**Irena Komninakas**-- I was nervous beginning this excursion and what this trip could expose me to spiritually and emotionally. Past participants of the ASP mission trip have said the experience transforms your way of thinking and it requires humility and compassion as you take care of your family. Previous participants say the households and way of life you are placed in differs from your own and the entire experience exposes yourself to how blind you were before the trip. This remark could not have been more accurate for me. My family lived in a single-story home with no car, holes and cracks in the floors, and one capable door. The biological parents of the three children were drug addicts and currently in jail, so the children's aunt took care of them. I couldn't help but reflect on the contrast between what this family was going through and my own life with my siblings who are similar in age to those we served. On this trip, I learned a lot about myself, reality, and how estranged lifestyles can be even within the same country.

**Andreas Lolis**-- The theme, highlight, and greatest joy of my week spent at ASP was the relationships that I developed. Prior to this week, I hadn't met three of my crew members, and had only brief conversations with the other two members of my work group. Construction is a bonding experience. Through more than a dozen van rides together, several really tough pieces of drywall that needed all six of us to be put up, and at least 7 hours spent together every day of the week, I was able to develop strong and close friendships with each person with whom I worked. In addition, I was able to fortify my relationships with people I already knew from my home parish. This relationship will be further enhanced during church activities and future service trips to Appalachia. Further, I developed a close relationship with my homeowner and her children. The youngest, a 5-year-old boy was one of the sweetest, most outgoing and kind kids I had ever met. Our conversations were so memorable and precious I don't think I'll ever forget them. The most important relationship that I reinforced was that with Jesus Christ. Knowing that I was serving Him by bringing peace to my homeowners allowed me to truly feel God working through me while I was serving the people of Knox County, Kentucky.

**Ellie Maniatis**-- I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to attend ASP for a second year. My site had three crews and it was so much fun working with everyone and hanging out. The family's house we worked on wasn't as social and openly appreciated like my homeowner last year, but I knew what we were doing still mattered. I also really enjoyed meeting people from all over the country. I definitely think there's some people I met that I'll keep in touch with for a long time. It was also cool to see how the program is expanding. One thing in particular that I thought was really fun this year was culture night, especially the tomahawk throwing. Overall, I would call this trip a success and I hope to return back again.

**Spiro Maniatis**-- A small town by the beach surrounded by people who care about themselves. Everybody is wealthy and for the most part happy. That's where I live. I have been living a life that I think is stressful and hard. Until I took a visit to Kentucky. I was so worried about my life that I didn't take a minute to pick my head up and look around. I didn't take a second to share a smile. I didn't take the time to ask how someone was feeling. I knew this mission trip would change my perspective on others, but I didn't think it would change who I was. My family was in a particularly tough situation. Seeing their pain made me feel angry, frustrated and sad. In the end, as we drove away from the house on the last day, I prayed. I prayed for the children, and I hoped for them to get out of their situation and lead healthy and happy lives.

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# Reflections

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That was all I could do. And although I was bothered by that, I prayed and prayed for their safety. I prayed and prayed for their peace.

Overall, as I drive back after the week, I can't help but feel different. As I looked at the people who surrounded me, I wondered, which one of those people needs me? Which one of them has lost their peace? So, as I move forward in my life, I am going to make a vow. That no matter what happens to me, or the people I love, I will always try to the best of my ability to bring peace to whomever may need it. I will reach my hand out to those who have lost Christ. I will try to pull them back on the path to salvation and attempt to keep them there as best as I can. And I will try to restore the peace back in their hearts.

**Adriano Morfa**-- Kentucky was a lot fun. What amazed me most was seeing at my family's home how much her neighbor cared about her and her kids.

**Giovanni Panagiotakis**-- This year was my second year with OYMT, and I thoroughly enjoyed my experience. The center was much bigger and there was a lot more people that came from many different areas of the country. I enjoyed learning new things at the worksite, as well as guiding and helping first year members of the team. The experience was one not to forget. In the end I and many others in the group were able to feel the peace in ourselves and feel the peace we delivered to others. I hope next year will bring another opportunity for a mission trip.

**Grace Radcliff**-- This week has been fantastic! We had people come from 8 different states in total. Of course, at first, everyone was sticking to the people they knew, but as the week went on everyone started integrating with each other which was nice to see. At my house our homeowner would babysit these two little kids, Dakota(4) and Dalton(7). They were the cutest things, so full of energy and constantly running around. On the last day Tyler (Kentucky) and John (Connecticut) came up with the idea to build a swing for the kids. It took them all day, yet it was worth it really. Dakota and Dalton loved it! The two wouldn't get off (except when the other wanted a turn). Seeing them smile and laugh from that made my day since they usually are stuck inside playing games or watching TV. They now have something to look forward to when visiting!

**Demetri Teodosio**—For our homeowners Betty and Wayne we worked on drainage, flooring and tin siding. Everyday we ate lunch with them on their porch and talked about their dogs and other things. From this experience I learned that family is everything.

**Anthony Villa**-- I honestly thought the week was so much better than I expected. I actually enjoyed it and my crew made the experience even more fun. I loved the family, getting to use the tools, and meeting new people.

**Jacob Villa**-- My week that I spent with ASP was a good learning experience and it was fun at the same time. It was nice meeting the family and getting to help them better their homes and all the activities that we did made it that much better. It was a great experience and I would recommend going to ASP.

**Martin Villa**-- Before going on this trip, I had many assumptions of how it was going to be. Throughout this week, I've realized there's so much more than just what I want. I saw people in desperate situations and we tried to help them as best as we could. One of the many things I've learned during this trip was do not make assumptions for we do not know the situations our families are in. And leaving this trip, I go home with a different mindset that I never thought I wanted but I needed it.

**Thana Zikos**-- This week at ASP I did the underpinning for a trailer. Not only did we do work but we built a relationship with our homeowner Joyce and her family. Although their family is in poverty, every single one of them had such a positive outlook on life. The trailer the family lived in was in shambles and literally breaking by the minute. Every time one thing got fixed another broke. And even with all the trouble the family had, they always had faith that things would get better. I hope to have even half of the positivity the family had in my life. Next year I want to go to ASP again because the bond you build with your family is so special.

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## We're ready for next year!

OYMT will have our own center for an  
Appalachian Service Project Trip  
July 11-19, 2020

If you are a teen or adult interested in joining us, or you'd like to find out how to form an OYMT crew at your parish, please attend one of our presentations or contact:

Fr. Luke Mihaly [padreluke@aol.com](mailto:padreluke@aol.com)

Susan Sulich [ssulich@yahoo.com](mailto:ssulich@yahoo.com)

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For more information about our team, visit [www.oymt.info](http://www.oymt.info)  
and for the ASP organization, visit [www.asphome.org](http://www.asphome.org).

We have a new YouTube channel for "Orthodox Youth Mission Team."  
Look for our latest video of our 2019 trip!

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Thank you again for supporting us, and we hope you will invest in our success again next year!