

Mary Lyle Smith, Colby Tharpe, Graham Shaffer, and Ryan Moore, with a conclusion by The Rev. De Canaday

Sunday, August 5, 2007

Hi! I'm Mary Lyle Smith, and I was on Site 4 with Emily Wiedemann this year. The lady Emily and I worked for was nothing short of amazing. Her name was Mrs. Sapp, and she had battled cancer, and had to have her voice box removed. Though she sounds limited to what she could do, you could tell she knew God and that she loved Him a lot. We also had the awesome addition of her granddaughter, Ashley, who was only 15 years old. She was such a helper to us that I half-expected to see her every night at church, walking around with all the other campers. After getting off to an awkward start, our group had finally gotten used to each other, and we were having a good experience just being around everybody. As the week went on, I noticed that the camp had a sort of all-around theme that was being out of your comfort zone. That's what I want to stress the most. The first non-comforting thing that happened this week was we weren't getting to pick our sites. They were assigned to us so any friends you were really close to probably weren't going to be on your site. The second non-comforting thing I noticed was not involved with the campers, but with the homeowners. They were allowing us into their homes and lives to see the poverty they live around all the time. These people that have nothing to begin with, give everything including their pride so that they can live a bit more comfortably. When Friday night arrived, I suddenly felt very ashamed of myself. I had felt that it was unfair that I might not have a friend on the site with me, and I probably said some ugly things about how miserable I'd be or uncomfortable or lonely. Then I thought of Mrs. Sapp, who didn't have her husband anymore, no voice to speak with, and no extravagant home to show off to people, yet she gave us the biggest smiles and warmest welcome she had in her so that we could feel a little more comfortable, too. We would usually get excited at the sight of something like a brand new car, and she cried when she saw her new shower curtains. That night, I realized that when God took me out of my comfort zone completely, I felt more comfort from Him than I ever have before. I finally understood what God had been trying to stress to me for so long. I also figured out that if you give up your comforts, you'll gain them back even more.

I'm Colby Tharpe, and I was on Site 7. Scurry, MacKenzie, Colby, go wash your hands for dinner! This is the usual announcement every night made by my mother. At the time, I didn't think anything of it, but as of two weeks ago on our Salkehatchie trip, I realized that not every family is as fortunate as us. On my site on Salkehatchie week, I was working on the Schunover home. This house consisted of any elderly couple, Carol and Don Schunover, and their young grandchildren, Aaron and Brett, who were 7 and 8 years old. This is my second year at Salkehatchie so I was still new, but comfortable at coming into people's houses and repairing them. On that first Sunday, when we visited our houses, I realized something seemed different from last year. As soon as we got into the home, Ms. Carol greeted us on her front porch. There was a distinct look on her face as a little boy walked through our circle of people. As soon as Miss Kathy saw this look, she took the little boy, whom we found out was Brett, and asked him to show her the house. I was looking at the uneven floors and the holes in the walls and the doors, and a different little boy came up to me, and introduced himself as Aaron. He showed Ryan, one of my fellow site members, and me his house. I was shocked when we went into the kitchen and saw thousands of roaches, and when we went into the rooms; there was a foul stench of urine from the beds. As the tour of our house ended, we rode to a member of the church's home for a pool party to kick off the week. We returned to the church for site meetings, and we made our to-do list for the house and the what-to-get list for Fred's. The next morning, we started out how we would start every day of the week by

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devotion and prayer, and then we got into groups and hit the house. We tore up the floors and got trash out of the yard. When we started working, Brett and Aaron got so excited and were trying their hardest to help us anyway that they could. We started the house with a bang. By lunchtime, all the trash in the yard was picked up, and we were almost finished getting floors out of two rooms. As soon as we were done stuffing ourselves with some of the most delicious homemade food, we went back to the house, and started back up working. When we went under the house, Coach Dave and Miss Peggy, our site leaders, pointed out that the main joists holding the house were rotten and badly termite-eaten, and those they would definitely need to be replaced. Since there was no room for all of us under the house, Kayla, Phillip, and I were determined to get the cockroaches out of the kitchen. This is the case I was talking about earlier when I said how fortunate we were. Kayla, Phillip, and I went to Sanders Building Supply and bought more than \$50.00 worth of stuff to kill cockroaches, and there were still hundreds more to kill. After we had given up, we went to help with the floors. I helped cut the wood, and put it into place for the new floors. When they didn't need anymore help, I decided to get some quality time with Brett and Aaron. I got Sarah's digital camera to take some pictures of them and the guys fixing the floor. I got some good pictures of Wesley cutting up with the kids. They loved him to death. Around the end of the week, we went to Fred's again to get some adhesive tile to finish off the floors. We finished putting the tile down in three bedrooms, a hallway, and a living room in two days. After we finished the floors, we got two new bed frames for the boys and new mattresses, box springs, pillows, pillow covers, sheets, and comforters for the boys and Mrs. Carol and Mr. Don. Oh, did I mention that we painted Brett's room a bright orange for the General Lee off the Dukes of Hazzard? They were also happy when we came back Saturday and asked them if they had a good night's sleep in their nice clean beds. When we had to leave for the last time, everyone on our site was crying because we did not want to leave yet because we had gotten so comfortable and attached to the family, mainly the boys. I would like to thank Miss Kathy, Mr. Greg, and Kayla and Wesley for being on my site with me this year. I had a great time with all of you. I would also like to thank Sarah and William and Ryan and Heather and Phillip for being such good friends this week even though I just met you. I would also like to thank Coach Dave and Miss Peggy for being such great site leaders. I hope I'm on your site next year again. I would also like to thank the congregation for supporting us with all of your donations and prayers.

Hi, I'm Graham, and this is my fourth year at Salkehatchie. I was on Site 5 along with Ryan Moore and Jessica. We had a great time. Our site, as soon as we got there, we could tell that God had really put us together to work on this house. We all fit together perfectly. We all made very good friends. The site leader was awesome. He just told us what to do. He never got mad at us even when we messed up, which was a lot. We got there, and the house was not in very good shape. We had to build a deck for the homeowner. Her name was Helen Salley. She was the nicest lady I've ever met. Her deck was rotten. You couldn't even walk on it. We had to completely replace that. That was me and Ryan's job most of the week. We built pretty much the best deck I've ever seen. Jessica and some others were working on the windows. They put in some good windows, too. We also replaced the hot water heater. We fixed some weak spots all around the house. We replaced the toilet and the sink, some shelves. We put linoleum in most of the house. Helen Salley, our homeowner, when we first got there, we had like a little devotion planned to start off the day, and we did that, and she

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came out there with us, and said, “All right, Ms. Salley, is there anything you need?” She said, “Let’s pray.” She gave us her own devotion. She was a very spiritual lady. She showed us her Bible and everything. About the end of the week, when we were cleaning up and finally ready to show her the house, she was going through saying, “Oh, thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus! Oh my goodness, I cannot believe this! Thank you, Jesus, I’ve been waiting for this for so long!” She had a grandson named Moses. The whole week he never really said anything. He was just kind of hey, how’s it going, but the last day, Moses just came out of his shell. He was showing us how to do the moonwalk and the crawl and all kinds of dances. He was a crazy kid. I’m going to let Ryan tell you a little more.

I’m Ryan Moore, also from Site 5, the handful. Helen Salley and her two first names was probably the most faith-grounded person I have ever met. We cleaned out one of her closets, and all she wanted to have in that room was a big red chair, like the one from Blues Clues. I’m not talking to the right age group. Blues Clues has the big red chair and he does the notebook. She had one of those, and all she wanted to do was read her Bible in that every morning. Every night when we’d leave, she would clean out one of her rooms so we could get in it the next morning. There was some pretty heavy stuff in there, and she’s about 60 years old, and I really don’t know how she did it. We’d come back, and chairs would be on top of other chairs on top of bunk beds stuffed in this other room. I was amazed she didn’t like hurt herself and possibly die. I don’t know. Our site was also the best site I’ve been on. Salkehatchie every year is a little different, but this year was probably my favorite. We had only one new person, and that was Shelly, and she was not mentally a carpenter’s person so on Wednesday when we played on the jokes, getting her to find board stretchers, Jeff, our site leader, got a new one. We had this paint that said paint/primer, and he goes make sure you stir it the right way as she was opening it. I looked at him, and I was like I don’t know what you’re talking about. He just looked at me like go along with it. She said, “What?” He goes, “Yeah, stir it clockwise for primer, and counter clockwise for paint.” She was like okay, and she looked at me, and I’m just, yeah, the technology is amazing. So, you know, I made sure I stirred it clockwise, and I didn’t think she really believed him. We painted the two windows, and I was going for the ladder widget, and she was, all right, here’s the paint, Sarah, stir it counterclockwise, and we’ll paint them. I was like, no Shelly, no, um, I don’t know if she still gets that one. Then Moses was a hilarious little kid. You’ll see him in the slideshow. On Friday, I was pretty tired, and was ready to go home, but with Moses there, it really helped me through it. It was kind of hard to think of something I learned at Salkehatchie because it was such an easy year, but one thing I learned is that when you do everything for the right reasons, and you all work together, it is easy. It comes out right. Thank you.

I hope that you feel that it is most appropriate now for us all – youth and all of us – to participate in the service of the Holy Communion, the source of the kind of love that has been shared and experienced by our youth at Salkehatchie. This kind of love, patient and consistent, is the kind of love that has come into the world through the One, Jesus Christ.