

Collegiate Challenge: Day 1

MARCH 10, 2015 BY [VOLSTU27](#) (EDIT)

Today was the first day of the Collegiate Challenge, involving long car rides, friendly new characters, and the exploration of a new setting. The first stage of the day consisted of a five-hour journey from the University of Portland campus to Oak Harbor, where we will be staying in a Habitat for Humanity house. Along the way, at a pit stop, our group encountered an amiable couple who gladly let us interact with their well-behaved pet cockatoo. Upon arriving at the Habitat for Humanity store, we received a warm greeting from Melissa, the Oak Harbor Habitat for Humanity Program Director—who also provided generous amounts of pizza and snacks. After a general overview of the program, our group drove out to the house that we will be residing in for the next week – a small, but cozy, two-bedroom home located a few miles out of town. After unpacking and a bit of planning we split into two groups; one went to the market to buy food, while the other took a walk around the local neighborhood to explore the area.

We learned that Habitat for Humanity is an international organization who maintains projects all over the globe. The organization provides homes, built by volunteers, to those in need. Those that receive the house are expected to pay monthly mortgages and commit their own time to building other homes, as a form of paying it forward and helping others.

-Jarrett Okita

Collegiate Challenge: Day 2

MARCH 10, 2015 BY [VOLSTU27](#) (EDIT)

Today was the second day in Oak Harbor but the first day on the jobsite. We all got up bright and early at about 7am with a departure time at 8am. Melissa, the program

manager, and all of the regular volunteers greeted us when we arrived at the jobsite with doughnuts and fresh coffee! In general, the first half of the work day moved much slower than the second half since we were all still learning how to properly hammer in nails straight and frame a house. Once we all got the hang of it things moved much quicker. We started off with a concrete slab and ended the day with almost all of the first floor framed and boarded.

The introductions in the beginning were pretty funny since we all had to get our little aprons to hold our nails and hammer but also a hard hat that we were required to wear at all times. Damion, our project manager, asked us to put our names on the front and back of the hats but had the freedom to give ourselves nicknames. Kaitlyn was Krush, Parkes was P-Diddy, Tayler was T-Sauce, and Katie was Lambchop. I'm pretty sure that every single time Damion called one of their names people just started laughing.

Once we all had our gear, Damion showed us a quick demonstration on what we had to do. We all got straight to work but were deceived on how easy he made it look. I, along with many of my other team members were pounding in nails crooked left and right and hitting fingers just as much. Needless to say, we had to learn the hard way how to properly nail beams together. In less than an hour we finished our first framed wall and lifted it up with pride to its standing position. At this point, many of us got proficient in using the hammer, so frames were being made and put up much faster. By the time any of us noticed, all four walls were up and it was time for lunch.

After lunch, half of us worked on finishing the interior frames while the other half started boarding up the exterior walls. Talking with Scarlet, the homeowner, while working on the house, made all of us connect to the house that much more since we were working side by side with her. Starting the process over a year ago, Scarlet said it was very weird building the house because it just seemed so far away before. With majority of the first floor completed, I am very excited to finish it and start on the second floor.

-Anthony Ng

When we got home (our beautiful habitat, cozy 2 room home), we all were pretty exhausted from the day. While some of us sat and played games, a few of us braved the icy cold shower for a few minutes at a time. Thankfully, by the end of the night, help had arrived and our hot water was showered upon us! For dinner, we had a beautiful home cooked meal of tacos made by Allie, Jarrett, and Shannon. Afterward, we all enjoyed a game of “two truths and one lie” as well as “the love of my life but...”. The house is definitely becoming a nice home to us all. We spend time doing homework, lounging around, and playing games together. Our second discussion of the night was held and we all were able to talk about our first day experiences and expectations. We ended the night with a high energy game of spoons.

The day was bright, energetic, and enjoyable. Although it was tough manual labor, we all were able to work together to get the walls of the house up! The crew was extremely helpful – always there for us to ask questions. We were served hot coffee and a fabulous lunch of burgers and hotdogs, along with more donuts! The day was long – but extremely fun and high-spirited for all.

-Katie Ha





Collegiate Challenge: Day 3

MARCH 10, 2015 BY [VOLSTU27](#) (EDIT)

Today marks our third day of our trip, and our second day on the jobsite! After arriving at the job site, we were given coffee and donuts from Mark, a kind and helpful man working with us on the jobsite. Eventually, the crew put us to work. I used my first drill today as Mark showed me how, and Kaitlyn used a 22-caliber nail gun to connect a piece of board to the concrete. She felt very powerful after that! Lindsay helped Damion

make sure that all the walls were level with a long leveling stick, and Taylor anchored the house to the foundation. Once the walls were ready to go, we took out the ladders and began nailing another layer of boards to the top of the walls. The sun soon began to shine, and we were all grateful! For lunch, a kind man named, Jean, brought us delicious pizza, and another lady brought us delicious banana bread with butter cream cheese frosting. We have been well fed (to say the least).

Soon after, members of our group carried about a twenty-foot beam weighing about 500 pounds to support the second floor, and it was successfully put on top of the walls. Later, Jarrett used a saw to cut out the windows and doors, and so it's looking more and more like a house. After the two final beams were lifted up and put in their proper places, we cleaned up the site, took some pictures, and left to go back to the house.

On our way back, Lindie thought it would be a good idea for us to stop our car in front of a playground, we all jumped out of our car, and ran to the merry-go-round to confuse Shannon's car behind us. They eventually joined us after the confusion, and we enjoyed being kids again. Later in the afternoon, we drove to Driftwood Beach, a cold and windy, but beautiful place. After staying there for a little while, we drove up to Fort Casey and walked through the fort, filled with dark rooms, barracks, climbing up ladders into bunkers, and disappearing guns. We learned that it was a place during World War I in which none of the canons were ever used because no one ever attacked that site. The forts were placed eerily on beautiful fields of green grass against snow-capped mountains with the flowing ocean in the background. It's shocking to think that such a magnificent, peaceful place can be the placeholder of cannons set to shoot any ship coming in the river valley. Fort Casey made all of us think a lot about war – making the act of death and war a reality. We sometimes live in a sheltered world, where we forget that war is a very real experience in many different parts of the world as well as in the past. It was an overall great experience – of reflection, humility, learning, awareness, and beauty.

Today has been filled with many adventures that I am grateful to be a part of.

-Allie Labrousse





Collegiate Challenge: Day 4

MARCH 11, 2015 BY [VOLSTU27](#) (EDIT)

Day 4 of the Collegiate Challenge!

Today started off with a quiet morning and dewey car windows. At the work site, the group diligently worked on scaffolding, sheathing, and then working on putting up joists onto the second floor. The work was methodical and laborious, but all the more rewarding. Scaffolding consists of making a second floor stabling around the border of the home in order to more easily access the soon-to-be second floor. Sheathing is

boarding up the walls to the home to create a barrier. Joists are long boards of wood that will secure the second floor. Throughout the day, we were able to hear some stories of Damion (the crew's head/ Habitat for Humanity Construction Manager) as well as interact more with the other crew workers (Dean, Paul, and Mark). Each of them are so helpful, supportive, and fun. Paul, an 86 year old man, always arrives at the worksite at 8:00 AM sharp, with our group rolling in at 8:30 every morning. He denied a gift of a Habitat shirt because he is a humble man that continues to give every day without asking for anything in return.

For lunch, plans changed from the expected and Melissa ended up going to the grocery store and picking up fried chicken and mac salad for all of us. She is filled with joy and excitement – and we love having her around everyday. Scarlett and a co-worker of hers also stopped by during lunch to say hello. We were very grateful for the day because although we were expecting rain – we were showered upon with intervals of sunlight.

The days are moving by so quickly and tomorrow is going to be our last full day at the worksite. Throughout the week, we have all bonded so much – either through games like Monopoly Deal or little stories and events at the work site – to late night ice cream (rocky road and vanilla bean hits the spot). Food group 3 (Lindie, Anthony, and Kaitlyn) cooked a wonderful meal of breakfast for dinner aka BRINNER that was delicious and fun. We all sit in a circle in the living room floor and eat our meals together.

We are all learning a lot about ourselves, Habitat for Humanity, and the community at large. We are thinking about what it means to be here serving during our spring break and being in solidarity with our group, the crew, and Scarlett. Our interactions, our intentions, and our actions all overlap to a greater meaning in the world around us and it's important for us to remember that.

From the highs to the lows (there aren't any lows), I cannot believe the week is almost over. We have made a routine of living in simplicity and solidarity with one another in this small but cozy home in Coupeville, Washington. Ending the night with a discussion on, "Can you still be friends with your ex?" just completely sums up the group and the intense happiness that our group has created throughout this week.

We had a great time adding to the home – working, bloody for hammering or sore from heavy lifting – we are thankful to be on the work site and making a difference.

-Katie Ha



Collegiate Challenge: Day 5

MARCH 13, 2015 BY [LINDIE \(EDIT\)](#)

Today is the fifth day of our immersion, fourth day at the jobsite, and last full day of work. After a brief gathering with coffee and donuts, we all dove into putting the finishing touches on the scaffolding in preparation for the second floor. We had tremendous progress on the work site today when we shifted focus upwards. We worked together in globing wood glue on top of the I-beams, then laying down a sheet of wood together, and followed by many nails and screws to bolt the wood down. Our teamwork today shined as bright as the sun today as we rapidly put down piece after piece of wood. Damion, the Habitat for Humanity Construction Manager, was floored (pun intended) by how quickly we laid down the sheets of wood for the flooring of the upper level of the house. He had expected us to have the second level flooring done by tomorrow, but we had finished this task by lunchtime.

The lunch today was absolutely delicious and was provided by Angelica and Jennifer, two lively ladies who will be receiving houses from Habitat for Humanity later this year. They prepared a homemade feast of carne asada and tortillas, rice, beans, freshly made guacamole and salsa, crispy chips, gooey brownies, and soft chocolate chip cookies. This break was filled with numerous stories and moments of laughter, especially when Jennifer described to us a board game called Donkey that her friend had made. She kindly loaned the game to us to play before bedtime and I predict that more laughter will be shared tonight thanks to her generosity.

With full bellies, we climbed back on the newly laid floor and began building the walls to the second level. It was much similar to how the first floor walls went up so as professionals we once again amazed Damion and the crew by how fast we nailed the studs, trimmers, and cripples in place to raise the walls on three sides of the house.

After cleaning up, we all travelled to China City, an impressive Chinese restaurant in Oak Harbor, for our farewell dinner provided by Habitat for Humanity with support of China City. Melissa expressed heart-warming thanks to the group for us coming to help

build this house for Scarlet and we were all given plastic hard-helmet party hats with our “hard-hat” names to commemorate our time spent in Oak Harbor.

Back at the house, everyone ventured out to the front yard with cots, sleeping bags, and blankets to take short naps or relax in the lovely weather as the sun set. We discussed tonight on how we can turn our gratitude into action not only for the immense generosity of Habitat for Humanity but also in general. We also conversed on what sort of connections exists between sweat equity and expressing thanks.

Even though today was filled with ample amounts of excitement and wonderful memories, it is bitter sweet to know that our journey will be coming to an end tomorrow. But we look forward to arriving at the worksite bright and early tomorrow to make the most of our time by working hard to finish the second floor and building (another pun intended) stronger bonds between each other and our friends from Habitat for Humanity.

-Kaitlyn Krushinsky



Collegiate Challenge: Day 6

MARCH 14, 2015 BY [VOLSTU27](#) (EDIT)

Day 6 of the trip has been both nostalgic and exciting. Today was a half-day on the site, so we spent our time putting up the second floor's exterior walls. It was amazing to see how much better each of us has gotten at nailing! In contrast to the first day, we built and put up these walls at a much faster pace. As such, we have dubbed ourselves experts at construction, and are quite confident that we now have the skillset to build our own houses. We finished this last day of working on the house with a little surprise show we prepared last night. First, a little background information. Last night, our group concocted a brilliant way to say "thank you" and "goodbye (for now)" to the members of the Oak Harbor Habitat for Humanity community that have made our trip so special. We sifted through many different plans, one of which was Katie's suggestion that we walk in to the Backstreet Boys and do star jumps. After much deliberating, we settled on a genius plan. So, this morning we asked if the staff would mind taking a group photo with us. The first one we took was an actual photo, but the next time Anthony went to take another, he actually turned on the recorder so that we could capture the moment. At this cue, we joined hands and surrounded the staff. We then proceeded to sing a song that Allie taught us. It goes:

"Thank you, thank you, I really want to thank you!"

"T-H-A-N-K-Y-O-U. Thanks. Da duh dun."

To top the performance off, each of us turned a circle in place and followed it off with a group hug. Our choreographed ritual was well received, or at least they pretended that they liked it.

We spent the latter half of the day at Deception Pass, where we went on a super awesome hike that Mark recommended. At the top of the trail, we had a peaceful

moment during which we all sat in silence and enjoyed the sounds of Mother Nature. Although this was not the last thing we would do on Day 6, it really summed up our trip's progression. Starting having known close to nothing about each of our "teammates," I now cannot imagine life without each of the goofy characters that have made up Collegiate Challenge 2015.

-Parkes Kendrick



