

Collegiate Challenge – Day 1 (March 6th)

MARCH 8, 2016 BY LINDIE ([EDIT](#))

Today was the big day. At 11:30 am everyone met at the Moreau Center with their belongings and joined together for a nutritious lunch of pb&j sandwiches, chips, and tangerines. We played an energetic name game, then joined forces to get all of the bags into two small vans. After taking a mandatory group photo and everyone was cozy in their seats, we started our drive to Tacoma, Washington. My car, which consisted of Lindie, Nicolina, Sam, Sunshine, Pricilla, and Francie, found a stray music CD from a previous immersion, provided great and entertaining mystery music once we got out of the radio station range. After a quick two and a half hour drive, the two vans met up at the First Lutheran Church, where we are staying for the week. We were met by Dick, from the church, and Tori, from Habitat, who gave us a quick tour of the church.

After settling in, some people went to get groceries while the rest of us explored the park across the street. For dinner, we drove to the Habitat for Humanity office building where we met with a group from Winona State University. We enjoyed delicious Dominos pizza, had a volunteer orientation and met with other Habitat workers. After the orientation, we headed back to the church to have our first reflection. Everyone was excited to learn more about how Habitat makes a difference to the families and the community. We were all excited to get to know each other better and have a fun and positive time up here, even if we have to endure rain for the entire week. We closed the night with a hilarious game of Cards Against Humanity and everyone headed off to bed at 10:45, preparing for an early wake-up call and our first day on-site. Everyone is super excited to get to work!

-Kelsey

Collegiate Challenge – Day 2 (March 7)

MARCH 11, 2016 BY LINDIE ([EDIT](#))

Today was our first day on the jobsite. After a very cold night on our rickety cots, we dragged ourselves out of bed and bundled up. After eating a quick breakfast we headed out to the thirty house development in Lakewood. When we got there, Nick, the main construction worker, and Tori were there waiting with a pot of warm coffee. Nick and Tori gave us a tour of the development which will include a community garden, a playground, a common house for events, and sustainable rain gardens. After an icebreaker and some coffee, the group was split up for landscaping and exterior painting of the house. The painters wore sturdy helmets while the landscapers put on gloves. Painters had their own brush and bucket with a nice purple paint ready to transform the plain white house to a pretty purple.

The landscapers worked in front of the house shoveling dirt around the water and electric meters on the ground (we don't really know the technical terms for these). The crew also leveled the front yard so that it will be ready for the topsoil and grass. This involved having to fill wheelbarrows with a pile of dirt and struggling to move them less than twenty feet. This also involved three people pushing, pulling, and steadying the singular wheelbarrow to accomplish our job. (Needless to say we woke the next day with aching backs)

Around 10:30, we took a quick break for snack that included fruit snacks and chewy bars. After 15 minutes, we jumped right back in to our tasks until lunchtime rolled around. As we sat around the living room of an already built house used as our resting station, we played a game called "Gecko" where one person steps out of the room and comes back in to guess who the "killer gecko" is. It was so fun we got Nick to join us for a round. In the midst of our bonding moment, Caleb, a five-year old boy in a bright orange jacket and his mother Lindsay (aka Debra) stepped into the house. Lindsay and her two sons, live in the house next to the one we were working on. She shared with us the life events that led her to owning a Habitat home with her situation of having two sons that both have medical conditions that requires extensive care. Miguel, her older son was born with underdeveloped kidneys which has led to a large number of medical problems including needing a feeding tube.

Caleb her younger son was born with an underdeveloped gall bladder, which lead to liver failure by the time he was six months old. At the age of one, Caleb received a liver transplant that saved his life. Throughout Caleb's illnesses, Lindsey struggled to deal with an unsupportive spouse and once Caleb was out of the woods, she decided to file for divorce. After struggling to find a place that she could afford, Lindsey found out about Habitat for Humanity and applied for a house. Lindsey is an active part of the community and is assisting in the planning of the community garden.

When lunch was over, the painting crew went back to work and the landscaping crew ended up just playing with Caleb for the rest of the day on the playground. The group headed to the YMCA to took a much-needed shower, drove back to the church and had an hour nap. After some delicious tomato soup and grilled cheese for dinner and group reelection, we went to sleep to reenergize ourselves for the next day.

Collegiate Challenge – Day Three **(March 8th)**

MARCH 9, 2016 BY LINDIE ([EDIT](#))

Day three, filled with glee!

7:10 never seemed so early. It's only day three and the soreness is setting in. After grumbling out of the cots this morning, we choked down our instant coffee and ran for the vans. The morning

routine is still new. On the way to the work site, the “cool” van (Sarah, Patty, Abby, May, Lauren, and Raychel) danced off our sleepiness to variety of tunes, ending with some Bon Jovi as we parked in front of the house.

We met up in front of the house we had worked on yesterday. The eggplant purple really stood out in the neighborhood of easter egg colored houses. We still had a second coat of purple paint to put on and then hopefully work on the white edging. Since we had perfected our painting skills yesterday, the second coat went on much faster. We were able to take more ownership of the work and take some initiative. Lauren and Sam were given the opportunity to tackle six foot scaffolding to paint the very top of the wall. After crawling up the ladder we were left stranded only to watch the paint dry for a good twenty minutes. Nick our supervisor realized we were MIA and came back with our favorite ladder. It just happened to be snack time.

By the time that snack time rolled around, everyone was full of energy and ready to devour some fruit snacks and trail mix. Snack time was much too quick, but was full of spunk. Before returning to work, Lauren attempted to throw nuts into Abby’s mouth. This was a quite tedious task and took numerous tries. Many attempts were close, but the execution was just not there. Eventually, after a good 3 minutes, Abby and Lauren perfected the peanut throwing and eating game. And back to work!



The groups went back to where they started, but some joined a group backfilling a foundation for a common house. The permits for the common house are still being processed, but we were preparing for pouring concrete. This process involved a lot of shovels, wheelbarrows, and hard work. While doing this, we worked along side a different Nick, who guided us along this process. With every hunk of dirt tossed, we shared embarrassing stories from our childhood, continuing to get to know each other better.

This common house was one of many community friendly parts of this Habitat site. The common house sits in the middle of the neighborhood right next to the playground and basketball court. The space is supposed to be used for neighborhood events, parties, and other meetings. The Home Owners Association will decide on a regulation process for use. There are also plans for a community run garden and a soccer field. The design focused on kid friendly design with lots of

stuff to do and play with. They expect over 100 kids to move in upon completion. Habitat really encourages the future home owners to invest in the space.

Today felt like everyone felt attached to the site. We all had a task that we wanted to complete before leaving for the day. It was encouraging to see progress on the house especially with only two days of work put in. There are so many more details we want to get perfect before leaving this house.

After showering, dinner, and a quick nap for some; the students from Winona State University and a Habitat family joined us at the church for a game night! After attempting at 20 person game of Apples to Apples, we split off into separate groups to play Sardines and have a dance party. It was awesome to interact with a family who has been through the Habitat process and hear their story. It really gave meaning to what we are doing this week!



RIHANNA WOULD BE PROUD OF US BECAUSE WE #WORKED IT TODAY!!

-Sam & Abby <3

PS – You can't really tell from this photo, but we are holding caricatures of our two team members who weren't able to join us on site this week. They were along for the entire journey to prepare for this immersion, but because life is often very full and recently threw them some curveballs, it was important for them to spend their weeks participating in the Collegiate Challenge from afar. T and T, we miss you and are thinking about you! We'll have to post close up's sometime later this week.

Collegiate Challenge – Day 4 (March 9)

MARCH 10, 2016 BY LINDIE ([EDIT](#))

Day Four:

Today was such a busy day! We started the morning with breakfast at the church and then headed off to the worksite we have been at for the past two days. Today was the last day we were at “The Woods” so it was crunch time to get all of our projects done before moving onto the next worksite.

We started off by backfilling the foundation footing on the common house. For people who don't know what that means (I had no idea before today), it's basically putting dirt around the foundation mold to seal it up so when the concrete is poured, the concrete will not escape the mold. This involved digging up dirt and then transferring it to the sides of the mold. It was very muddy but that project didn't take too long. They will be pouring concrete on Monday but sadly we will not be there to witness it. The downside of only working for a week for Habitat.

After the mold was all sealed up, some people continued to prep the foundation while I and others went to finish painting the trim on the house. It started to rain while we painted but the trim was at the very least was covered so the paint didn't get messed up. My painting process was mostly listening to jams and talking with my painting partner Lindie.

Before I knew it, it was time for lunch! Lunch today was so good! It was tofu chili (which I had never had before but am now doubting why it's not more popular). During lunch we spent time chatting with a homeowner in the development named Lindsey and her son Caleb who is a favorite among our group. After lunch, Lindsey let us tour her house and talked about how as a homeowner she had some say in the design of her house. After the short tour, it was time to say goodbye to the workspace that we had spent the first half of the week at. It was bittersweet knowing that we weren't going to be able to see the house all finished or meet the homeowners to a house that we had all been invested in for the first half of our week.

Our next stop in the pouring rain was to Swan Creek, where another Habitat group from Winona State was working. Since meeting another homeowner Daisy last night, we were curious on where she was going to live after moving in. While we didn't tour her exact house, we toured a house that had the same layout as hers in the same row of houses. After the short tour, we were done with our Habitat for Humanity duties for the day.

After our usual shower time and nap time, we spent the rest of the night with the church community of where we were staying at First Lutheran Church. When we first got to the church, the guy that was showing us around invited us to eat soup and attend their Wednesday prayer service. Who doesn't like free soup? We ate delicious soup, chatted with some church members

and then attended their service. The entire service was performed in song. It was an experience that certainly I had never had before but quite enjoyed.

The night was ended by Lindie's suggestion of Pictionary Telephone and roars of laughter before everyone realized that the night should end because we have to get up again at seven tomorrow morning. I'm exhausted but tomorrow is a new day! A new site! Good night!

– Francie

Collegiate Challenge – Day 5 (March 10)

MARCH 11, 2016 BY LINDIE ([EDIT](#))



Bomb group pic from yesterday #squadgoals

The sun peeked out through clouds this morning, and that probably best described how we were all feeling — tired and a little beat down, but none the less we were finding the motivation to continue on. Today was the first day of the week we weren't headed to the Woods, and instead to Tilicum, a new Habitat project, and energy was high when we rolled up to the house at 8:45.

The new project was the culmination of the painting skills we've perfected in the last few days, as groups of us climbed up shaky and scary scaffolding to paint a two-story house beige. Other groups helped with the installation of windows and pressure-washing the driveway. However, by the time we had our first snack break (thanks for the Thin Mints, Nick!) the rain was pouring and any sort of painting was rendered completely useless.

We accepted defeat and chose to spend the day adventuring instead. From Tilicum we piled into vans and adventured into Tacoma's Point Defiance Park, driving through a 5-mile scenic route. Many selfies were taken, the Puget Sound was mistaken for a big lake, and even a little wildlife spotting occurred (a wild raccoon family and a jogging man). A 3/4 mile hike ended in trust exercises and the exploration of Nisqually fort built in the 1800's before we headed back to the church.

Lunch consisted of warm chili and the routine showers at the YMCA commenced. Some took naps while others walked around the park next to the church and met dogs (Ace and Louie) and played frisbee. We then all traveled to Stadium High School, a public high school on the water front of Tacoma where *10 Things I Hate About You* was filmed. (Side note: that is one of my favorite movies of all time and therefore this goes in the books as one of my favorite days of all time. I was tempted to steal a loose brick from the school. I didn't, but it was tempting.) After Stadium High School, we travelled to Tacoma's Glass Museum and walked through the Bridge of Glass. Washington artist Dale Chihuly is a pretty well known glass artist and the bridge is full of some very cool pieces. A statue in front of the train stain fell victim to countless group pictures and finally we left to go grab some pizza out with Winona State University.

Our long day concluded with pizza at Farrelli's with some of the staff at Habitat for Humanity and the other Habitat for Humanity work crew out of Minnesota. With full bellies and lots of boisterous laughter, the University of Portland crew has made their way back to the church and is now settling in (rapidly) for bed. The weather tomorrow leaves us with an undetermined amount of work we can do and a lot of girls in the group are starting to dread the idea of leaving the trip and going back to school, but one thing is for sure — our last day here tomorrow is bound to be our greatest.



The iridescent Sunshine of our lives

See you all soon!

Love, Lauren and Raychel

Collegiate Challenge – Final Days (March 11-12)

MARCH 15, 2016 BY LINDIE ([EDIT](#))

Our last day on the Collegiate Challenge did not go as smoothly as planned – it was probably the hardest day of the week-long Immersion. As the ever-present rain in the Pacific Northwest would render our painting expertise unneeded at the two previous locations, we went to the third project site at Swan Creek, where Winona State University had been working all week.

University of Portland represented well on the last day of difficult manual labor, especially in the muddy, slippery surroundings. We efficiently finished tasks and looked for new tasks at the Swan Creek site, including filling up a muddy trench, installing important piping, and moving mountainous piles of small rocks and asphalt across the site. Plunges were taken by Priscilla and myself, people's backs were aching by the end of the day, and nobody left the site clean. A combination of the difficult work, the increased supervision, the increased number of students, and the mud ate away at the morale of the group and by the time the rain cut our workday short once again, it was clear that everyone was tired.

But although the day was long and fairly mundane (PUN!), small moments solidified how far we had come as a group of women throughout the week. As we waited for our time to shower at the YMCA, an impromptu (Sharpie) tattooing session broke out and everyone was gifted a free and semi-permanent reminder of their week with Habitat for Humanity. After showers, a palm-reading session broke out, and a fajita-turned-burrito dinner was prepared with help from both the group assigned to cook and some people who just wanted to help. Everyone cleaned after dinner because of the increased amount of dishes and nobody bothered to look up who was technically responsible. Problems were attacked with a group mentality, instead of 13 individuals. We worked for each other, not just ourselves.



Who knew at the beginning of the week that we would all form such a bond? Who knew that May would be so quietly kind and would work hard, without complaints, and look fabulous

while doing it? Who knew that Sunshine would be so incredibly selfless and would work so tirelessly for everyone else, taking creative and innovative photographs and also doing her share of work? Who knew Nicolina was so talented with working with kids and interacting with the families and employees of Habitat? Who knew that Priscilla would be so sassy and sweet or that Francie would be so okay with whatever best benefited the group and that both of their kindness kept the group going in times of fatigue? Who knew that Patty would be so open during reflection and that her perfectly timed Snapchats would capture some special moments throughout the week? Who knew that Sam would be so willing to climb scaffolding and whose laughter could be heard on the work site at all times – usually because either she or I dripped paint? Who knew that Kelsey was so freaking photogenetic and made even the most boring activities look fun? Who knew that Raychel’s impersonation of Jiggelpuff was so ineffective at putting us all to sleep and that she was always smiling, despite her injuries throughout the week? Who would’ve thought that Abigail was from a farm? And that she was so willing to teach us dexterity and life lessons from Alabama. (Not to mention her patience with the farm joke – she wasn’t really born on the farm. We just all really wanted her to be.) Who would’ve thought that Lindie and Sarah were the greatest group of leaders a rowdy, either slow-moving or hyperactive group of college kids could’ve asked for, bringing immense amounts of patience and humor and helping cultivate an environment where such a successful group was formed?



As I write this, I sit back in my bed at University of Portland. I’ve showered properly for the first time in a week, I’m about to go buy food instead of make it, and I’m in a big empty room that is tailored exactly to my needs. It’s interesting, then, that I miss the rowdiness of living with 13 girls, the small bathrooms with leaky sinks, the not-so-comfortable cots, the loudness of the heater at night, the uncomfortableness of the showers at the YMCA, and the hard manual labor of the day that I’ve become so accustomed to in the past five days. I’ll miss the feeling of quiet and tired accomplishment every night, the feeling of pride in my school, the feeling of companionship and friendship with a group who were strangers a week ago – it all amounted to a more rewarding experience than I could ever hope to have had. There will never be enough

words to explain the gratitude I feel – to Habitat, for teaching me that a home is different from a house; to University of Portland, for allowing me this opportunity and for introducing me to Lindie and Sarah; to Tacoma’s Pacific Lutheran Church for allowing us to borrow Paul the Polar Bear (a stuffed polar bear the size of an adult human!!) for the week and welcoming us into a kind and gracious community; and finally to the strong, beautiful, powerful, educated, and hilarious women of the trip whom I can’t wait to share more memories with.

I’m sure there are some very enviable stories of Spring Break out there, and I’m sure I’ll hear quite a few over the next few weeks as students flood the University of Portland campus once more. I hope I speak for the group and not just myself, but I can’t say I would’ve rather spent my Spring Break in any other way than with Collegiate Challenge 2k16.

The Collegiate Challenge is a Habitat for Humanity Build that happens during Spring Break. It is a great way for students to immerse themselves in issues surrounding housing in the North West, while also building community. Students not only work alongside peers, but also have the opportunity to collaborate with the families who actually receive the home they help to build.