

Registration Information & FAQ

Westborough ASP 2017

What's the difference between Appalachia Service Project and Westborough ASP?

Appalachia Service Project (ASP) is a Home Repair Ministry headquartered in Johnson City, TN. It brings thousands of volunteers from around the country to rural Central Appalachia to repair homes for low-income families. It makes homes warmer, safer, and drier for families and provides transformational service experiences for volunteers.

ASP was founded in 1969 by the Rev. Glenn "Tex" Evans, connecting the energy of youth with the deep needs of the poor. Since then, 377,412 volunteers have repaired 17,373 homes, and in the process, Appalachian families, volunteers, and staff have been immeasurably blessed. Over 16,000 volunteers have participated in ASP during 2016.

By transforming faith into ASP service, volunteers respond to a specific need: housing. By putting aside their own needs and desires, ASP volunteers free themselves to share talent, love, and concern with the people of Appalachia and with one another. More important than construction know-how is a willingness to enter the communities and homes of Central Appalachia with sensitivity, concern, and love — accepting people right where they are and just the way they are.

Westborough ASP is a group sponsored by First United Methodist Church and St Luke's Parish, both of Westborough, MA, which organizes groups of local volunteers to participate in ASP. The group began in 1990, and currently organizes two trips a year – a summer youth trip and a fall adult trip. This information is about the youth trip.

Who can participate?

The Westborough ASP program is open to high school youth in 9th grade and above during the 2016-17 school year. We also have spots for Leaders In Training (LITs: graduated high school through age 21) and Group Leaders (GLs: 22 and over). Construction experience is extremely helpful, but not a requirement as long as you are willing to pitch in and learn on the job.

Our program depends on caring, committed GLs to organize, transport, train, and lead our youth. If you know someone who would be a good GL, please let Jonathan know!

What kind of projects do we do?

Volunteers work on a variety of different projects, including tasks such as strengthening foundations, patching leaks, fixing roofs, building walls, repairing stairs, digging flood channels, installing plumbing, and painting exteriors. No matter how much building experience you have, we will match skill level to an appropriate project.

What does a typical week look like?

Departure Day (Saturday)

5:30 am Arrive at FUMC lot; Announcements, prayer, pictures, last-minute loading
6 am-6 pm Drive. Arrive at church on the route to stay overnight
6 pm Dinner, evening program, organizing
11 pm Lights Out

Arrival Day (Sunday)

6:30 am Wakeup
6:30-8 am Cleanup, pack, morning worship
8 am-2:30 pm Drive
2:30-5 pm Arrive at your center; register; meet other groups.
5-5:30 pm Staff introductions; review center rules, expectations, daily schedule, community information, center chores, etc.
6 pm Dinner
7 pm Construction meeting (safety review; overview of family files/project assignments)
11 pm Lights Out; rest for a big day tomorrow

Work Days (Mon-Fri)

7 am Rise and shine
7:30-8:30 am Devotions, breakfast, make lunch, load supplies
8:30-4:30 pm Work day with noon lunch break at the work site.
5-6 pm Crew check-in for project updates, supply requests, etc.
6-7 pm Dinner
7-10 pm Center clean-up; evening activities (fellowship, reflection, sharing, singing, playing, sometimes a guest speaker such as a local musician or artist); free time
10:30-11 pm Wind Down and Quiet Time; reflect on the day and settle in for a well-deserved sleep
11 pm Lights Out

Departure Day (Saturday)

7 am Pack, center clean-up, and good-byes.
7 am-5 pm Drive. Arrive at church on route to stay overnight
6 pm Dinner, evening program with reflections and debrief of the week's experiences
11 pm Lights Out

Arrival Day (Sunday)

7:00 am Wakeup
7-8 am Cleanup, pack, morning worship
8 am – 4 pm Drive
4-5 pm Unpack and clean out vans. Put things away. Go home!

Where do we go?

Our groups may be assigned to the Appalachian portions of any of 5 states: Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, or North Carolina. During our time there, we will stay in an ASP Summer Center, generally set up in a school or community center building, sleeping on floors and eating in the cafeteria. Because our group is so large, we expect to be split across multiple centers.

How do we pay for it?

One of the primary activities of the ASP group between signup and the actual trip is fundraising. Part of having a prepared ready-to-go group is being able to cover all our expenses. While there are certainly more expensive ways to spend a week's vacation, an ASP trip is still not cheap. Last year's youth group spent around \$715 per person on materials, room and board, travel meals, van rental, gas, and training, totaling \$117,291 for 164 people. Because the group overachieved on fundraising, we were able to include \$6000 for additional materials beyond our base budget, enabling us to do more.

This year's expense budget is estimated at around \$720 per person. Given that there are 2 group leaders per 5 youth in a crew, this works out to \$1008/youth. We also try to raise extra if possible, as mentioned above – since our base budget covers all our other expenses, extra funds can go directly to additional and higher quality materials.

Our policy has always been that we raise money as a group, through a variety of fundraisers. This has many benefits: it gives us practice working together as a team; it helps spread the financial load over participants with a wide variety of means; it gets us out as a group in front of our churches and community; and it requires people to be serious about their commitment of time and energy long before the actual trip. We remain committed to group fundraising for all of these reasons.

We have set minimum requirements for all participants, for both individual dollar amounts raised and hours spent in group fundraising activities. The minimum fundraising targets for this year are \$560 and 12 hours per youth. LITs only need 6 hours, but will have additional responsibilities during the trip. When youth participate in fundraisers where individuals donate money or items, or get personal sponsorships from family or friends, we credit funds directly to the youth who brought them in. For events that we work on as a group, we divide the net money raised by the number of participants, weighted by time spent. Hours will be credited for working on group events, but not for the individual time looking for sponsors, asking family for direct contributions, etc. Specific handling will be published for each event. We also need parents to help, and parent participation can fulfill up to 4 hours of a youth's 12 hour requirement.

We have 2 checkpoints during the year, to make sure people are on track with fundraising. These mirror the deposits that ASP asks for from us and we have found intermediate checkpoints to be very useful in helping people to think through their level of commitment and make hard decisions about their ability to participate, possibly opening up space sooner for others who are able to commit fully. ***Anyone on the confirmed list who misses these deadlines will be moved to the end of the waitlist, and the person at the top of the waitlist offered their spot.***

- **All youth and LIT volunteers must reach \$50 by Jan 15.**
- **All youth volunteers must reach \$280 (includes the initial \$50) by March 26.**
- **The balance of the \$560 and the 12 hours are required by June 25, 2 weeks before the trip. The trip is July 8-16, 2017.**

It is not our intent to create a bunch of paperwork or a lot of pressure. Fundraising can be fun and a great chance to get to know people. ***The minimum per youth requirement remains well below (just over half of) what we actually need to fund the trip!*** We hope we can depend on everyone to do what needs to be done. But with the large group we need a way to maintain a level of accountability and workload balance among our many members, and to move folks through the process of discovering if they are committed to the level of participation required to enjoy this unique mission experience.

Besides fundraising, what do we have to do to get ready?

Youth are expected to attend 3 program meetings, and a weekend retreat. The program meetings are normally held January, late March, and June. The preparation retreat weekend is held in May or early June. All of the events are designed to pass on essential information about the trip, set expectations, teach skills, get people thinking and praying about their week of service, and get the group (including the leadership) used to working together and making things run smoothly. Returning volunteers will help communicate information to those who are new. Participation in all events or suitable makeups is mandatory for youth volunteers. Some exceptions may be made for LITs who attend college remotely.

PROGRAM MEETINGS

January Program Kickoff Meeting

March/April Program Meeting

May/June Prep Retreat Weekend

June Final Meeting

Why do we have a Waitlist? How is it formed?

Our goal is to make the trip possible for everyone who would like to participate and to maximize the work we are able to do for ASP families. Ultimately, however, the size of the group we can actually take is based on the number of committed adult Group Leaders we have, the size of the organization we can capably manage, and the amount of money we expect to be able to raise. We will not commit to a bigger group than we feel we can lead and equip safely and effectively.

We also know that for various reasons, youth will sign up but not be able to participate by the time of the trip. To account for this natural attrition, we always start the year with a waitlist. We do our best to plan the Waitlist size (subject to the limitations above) so that it will drain completely. In only one year (2011) have we still had people on the Waitlist at the time of the trip.

The initial **Confirmed list** is formed once the signup deadline is reached. We start with the **initial pool** of youth who are signed up by the deadline. This means **anyone who has registered online AND turned in their Volunteer Covenant** by the registration deadline will be placed in the initial pool. We do not register people on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The initial pool is then prioritized in this order:

1. Youth having a family member who is a committed group leader. (If we have more GLs than GL spots, GLs will be waitlisted according to the same priorities as youth.)
2. Returning youth (see below for explanation on this)
3. Youth waitlisted last year
4. Youth waitlisted last year and didn't fulfill all the requirements to go
5. New youth

Within each of the above categories, the youth are ordered by grade. For people who tie within a category/grade, the order is chosen randomly.

Youth from the initial pool beyond the committed group size are placed on an ordered **waitlist**. The waitlist will be published in early November. Anyone who signs up after the registration deadline is placed at the end of the waitlist at that time.

How do I move off the waitlist?

Youth will move to the confirmed list as spots open up due to other youth dropping out of the program or failing to meet their program and fundraising commitments. If someone on the confirmed list is not in good standing when a checkpoint is reached, they will be dropped to the bottom of the waitlist and another youth will be moved up to take the spot.

If you are on the wait list, it is up to you how much you participate. All fundraising deadlines will be suspended unless and until you are officially confirmed as an attendee on this year's trip. However, when/if you are moved to the confirmed list, you will still be responsible for completing all requirements prior to the trip, so you don't want to get too far behind.

Why do we give priority to returning youth instead of new youth?

ASP impacts everyone who participates – families served, youth volunteers, group leaders, staff members – in unique and special ways, and every trip is different for every participant. A younger youth may discover working with their hands or their ability to help someone for the first time, while young adults (Leaders In Training - LITs) may learn how to lead and how to facilitate someone else's experience. ASP has many things to teach that take more than a week to learn (or at least to internalize). Speaking for me (Jonathan) personally, ASP has not become less important to me over the 30+ years that I have participated, and I would be a much different person had I stopped being part of it after 12th grade.

That said, our group actually depends on having a large number of repeat participants. While we put a lot of effort into training and preparation of the group, the fact remains that there is a limit to how much information we can transmit prior to the trip, and we intentionally use the accumulated experience of our group to bring new people up to speed and set expectations through example. Older students are often much more relevant role models for high school youth than adults. We have intentionally cultivated an ASP community that extends beyond the boundaries of a single year's group, and maintains continuity over time.

While each year the confirmed list tends to be dominated by returners at its initial publication, the final effect in practice has not been so dramatic. Things clear out over time. We consistently end up with 40-50% first timers in each final group, which seems to be a good range for our program.

What happens to money I raised if I don't go on the trip?

The money we raise is the money required to fund the trip for the group. Many of our expenses are not strictly per person (dropping 1 volunteer doesn't allow us to not rent a van) and/or are incurred well before the trip (we pay ASP deposits in November and March). Furthermore, contributions to the program are charitable donations to the ASP program, not to individuals. We cannot refund money if someone drops out. We would encourage people who participate in fundraisers but are unable to go on the trip to consider that, even though they cannot attend, they have made a difference in the ongoing effort to eradicating substandard housing in Appalachia.

In the event that we do not clear the waitlist by the time of the trip, we will roll over "credit" for funds raised to next year for those youth started on the waitlist and never got off, and are otherwise in good standing. These youth will also be given priority for next year's trip.

Why do you need 6 digits of my Social Security Number?

ASP, First UMC, and St Luke's are all committed to the safety of both our ASP volunteers and the families we work for. Our group's policy is that everyone who works with children must pass a Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background check. Since we will all be living and working together for a week, and will not know until we arrive in Appalachia what families we may be working for, it is necessary for our entire group to undergo this check, both adults and youth, regardless of age. The last 6 digits of your Social Security Number, your birthdate and full legal name are required to perform this background check.

Why do you need the right to use my picture?

Our ASP group is commissioned and sent forth every year by FUMC and St Luke's, and we travel as their representatives. We have many family and individual supporters outside those churches as well. To keep them in touch with what we do every year, we create slideshows, bulletin boards, and social media albums showing our group in action, both during our week of service and during fundraising and training events. ASP also uses pictures of volunteers to publicize its work. Pictures will not be used for any other purpose.

What is the role of non-GL parents at ASP?

We need parent participation in many ways. First, your children need your support and encouragement as they take on a major project. As this document outlines, we are asking participants to make a big commitment, and they may need your help planning to attend meetings, meeting fundraising deadlines, packing, etc. ASP encourages youth to take responsibility, so we're not asking you to do these things for them, just help them make sure they get done.

Many of our fundraisers can benefit from parental participation. Those will be marked when we send out the signups. We will be especially looking for parents to help plan the annual ASP Gala event, and to help pick up and drop off rental vans around the trip itself. Parent participation can fulfill up to 4 hours towards their child's 12 hour participation requirement.

So you think you wanna go to ASP?

I hope all that didn't scare you off. I know it sounds like a lot. But, as with everything else related to ASP, if we decide to work hard, remind ourselves why we're doing all this and decide to have fun with it, we'll have a good time. And, we'll reach Appalachia with the most prepared, cohesive, well-funded, ready-to-hit-the-ground running group possible.

So, you still wanna go? Think about it. Pray about it. Talk to someone who's been before. Look at our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/WestboroughASP). Look at our website (www.westboroughASP.org) and ASP's website (www.asphome.org). Ask questions (asp@firstumchurch.com). Then, get your registration filled out (on the Westborough ASP website) and signed forms turned in by Oct 16th.

- Jonathan & the ASP Group Leader Team