



November 11, 2011

Dear Parents of Jr. and Sr. High Students,

Can you believe it is time to start thinking about summer and The Pittsburgh Project again?? This summer we would like to invite your teen to join us again for a great week serving God by serving others at The Pittsburgh Project! Our Jr. High week will be July 15th-21st and our Sr. High week will be July 28th-August 4th.

Our first meeting for Parents and Teens who have already attended a TPP trip will be Sunday, January 22nd from 11:30-12:30 p.m. in the chapel. You MUST attend this meeting if your student wishes to attend the trip this summer. If you are unable to attend the meeting you must work out an alternate meeting time with me.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Blessings,

Jaime Staehle

Director of Youth and Children's Ministry

The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell

Parent Handbook

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What is The Pittsburgh Project?

The Pittsburgh Project is a nonprofit community development organization with a 25 year track record of developing leaders and serving the city's most vulnerable residents. Their year round staff of 51 operates a progressive series of afterschool and summer programs for 450 urban young people, deploys over 2800 people annually to perform free home repairs for Pittsburgh's elderly homeowners, and spearheads economic development and job training efforts in their Pittsburgh neighborhood. Their vision is "That Pittsburgh will be called a City of Truth, where once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets each with cane in hand because of age, and where the city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there" (adapted from Zechariah 8:4-5).

Why the Pittsburgh Project?

The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell has been taking teenagers to The Pittsburgh Project for 16 years. Chuck and Joyce McGrath first began taking teens to Pittsburgh as a summer mission trip for Sr. High Students and it has since grown to include our Jr. High group as well. Throughout the years we have built a relationship with the staff and community of The Pittsburgh Project and return year after year to this place that has become dear to so many of our young people.

What Happens at The Pittsburgh Project

Students and adult advisors are broken up into work groups for the week. The first morning we are at TPP we eat breakfast, have morning devotions, and then head out to our work sites about 9am. We spend the day painting, putting up drywall, doing yard work, pouring cement, and a variety of other things that help out the poor and elderly of Pittsburgh. We return to TPP around 4pm for showers and free time. Most teens spend their free time in the game room playing four square, foosball, ping pong, or cards. Other go to the Charles Street Café for a cold coffee drink or smoothie after a long day. At 6pm we eat dinner and then head to Club which is in the sanctuary. We play games, sing, and listen to a speaker. Then we are dismissed to our discussion groups for the week. These groups consist of our work group as well as other teens and leaders. Following discussion we have free time until 10pm and then we head up to bed! Lights out is at 11pm. We follow this same routine fairly closely for the rest of the week!

Safety at The Pittsburgh Project

Your child's safety is of the utmost importance to us. We will be working and living in inner city Pittsburgh for the week. As with any inner city mission, the issues of poverty, drug use, and violence are prevalent. The North Side neighborhood that houses TPP respects the project and appreciates what the project has done for their residents. Unfortunately this does not keep there from being violence in the community. In the past 26 years of The Pittsburgh Project's existence, there have been a handful of shootings near the project campus, including one last year while we were there. No one from the project has ever been involved in any of these shootings, and there have never been any injuries to any Pittsburgh Project participant. If any such incident should occur on our summer service camp trips we will notify parents as soon as possible and will work with the Pittsburgh Project staff and police to ensure the safety of your children.

The Pittsburgh Project Campus

The Pittsburgh Project campus consists of three buildings – the Dormitory, the School, and the Church. TPP Participants are required to stay within this area at all times, unless going to the work site or somewhere else with an adult leader. There is an enclosed courtyard with a volleyball court as well as a game room within the Dormitory for teens to play foursquare, billiards, foosball, ping pong, and air hockey. In the lower level of the church there is the Charles Street Café where teens can purchase coffee drinks and goodies during free time. There is a park and pool across the street that the teens are invited to use during free time, but they must have an adult advisor with them.

Our Technology Policy

The use of cell phones and ipods has become an increasing problem, despite our policy of “no cell phones” each year. This year we are cracking down. As always, we ask that parents ensure that their student does NOT bring a **cell phone** on this trip. This week is a time to get to know other people and share in face to face communication. If we see a cell phone we will confiscate it. It will be returned to the parents in the parking lot of the church on our return trip. Students may still bring their ipods on the trip. In the past we have had issues with iphones (students want to use them to listen to music, but tend to be tempted to text and play games on them as well). **Ipods** may NOT be used during free time or on work sites. Ipods may only be used at bed time for those wishing to listen to music as they fall asleep. If we see an ipod anywhere else besides the sleeping quarters we will confiscate it and it will be returned to the parents in the parking lot of the church on our return trip.

Parent Contact

It is VERY important that we have a correct email address for you, as that is how we will be contacting you throughout the week. When we arrive at our hotel on the first night we will send out an email to let everyone know. Each day of our trip you will receive an email from the trip leaders letting you know how our day is going. Please keep in mind that we will only be able to go on the internet once a day for a very brief time, so please do not plan to hear back from us if you email us during the week. If there is an emergency, please call one of the adult advisors’ cell phones.

If you would like your teen to call you throughout the week before bed, they are more than welcome to use the adult advisors’ phones.

Trip Costs and Due Dates

Sr. High Trip

- January 22nd - \$150 Deposit Due
- March 4th - \$350 (If you do not pay by this date your spot WILL be dropped)
- July 15th – TBD (this final cost fluctuates yearly based on gas and hotel prices- but based on last year’s cost, should be roughly \$100)

Jr. High Trip

- January 22nd - \$150 Deposit Due
- March 4th - \$200 (If you do not pay by this date your spot WILL be dropped)
- June 17th – TBD (this final cost fluctuates yearly based on gas and hotel prices- but based on last year’s cost, should be roughly \$100)

Mandatory Meeting Dates

Growing together as a group and preparing spiritually for our week is a very important part of our trip. Meetings that are missed MUST be made up. PLEASE note that JH is for Jr. High students and SH is for Sr. High students.

- Sunday, January 22nd – First Meeting for all parents and students in Chapel @ 11:30a.m.
- Sunday, February 26th – Meeting for JH Students and Advisors in Chapel @ 11:30 a.m.
- Sunday, March 4th – Meeting for SH Students and Advisors in Chapel @ 11:30a.m.
- Sunday, March 11th – Meeting for JH Students and Advisors in Chapel @11:30 a.m.
- Sunday, April 15th – Meeting for SH Students and Advisors in Chapel @ 11:30 a.m.
- Sunday, May 6th – Meeting for JH Students and Advisors in Chapel @ 11:30 a.m.
- Sunday, May 20th – Meeting for SH Students and Advisors in Chapel @ 11:30 a.m.

Mini Missions

It is important to remember that our service to God does not only happen in Pittsburgh. We are called to serve the poor and elderly right here in New Jersey as well! For that reason we ask that each student participate in 8 hours of “Mini Mission” during the year. Here are some of the projects they may choose from this year:

- Date Night (Babysitting)
- Habitat for Humanity Build Day (age 16 and over)
- Cleaning the Sanctuary for Easter
- Camp Johnsonburg Spruce Up Day
- TPP Soup Kitchen Trip
- Spring Cleanup Day

Earning Your Tuition

We understand that summer mission trips can be a big expense. So we hope to offer some relief in the form of opportunities! We have asked several of our congregation members to “hire” our TPP participants to help them with projects around the yard, in the house, babysitting, etc. Money earned will go directly towards your TPP balance! If you would like to be notified of these opportunities as they arise, please let me know.

In Their Own Words

Don't take it from me, hear from our teens the impact that The Pittsburgh Project has had on their life and faith journey!

The experience the Pittsburgh Project brings to the camper is beyond what any outside viewer may believe. One learns so much in such a short time. Being face to face with poverty, handicaps, and sadness is the most humbling thing a teenager can do. Yet combatting all of that with a smile and a will to serve results in everyone receiving joy. I've always found this camp to be life changing; it made me a better person. I see growth in my character each and every year, just as I see it in everyone else. – Peter Shultz (entering 10th grade)

This week was full of struggles. However, for the first time, my struggles did not overwhelm me with strife and self deprecation, but rather, helped me see God's light. It seemed as though every scripture, every prayer, every discussion applied to my present pain and suffering. But they were all words of encouragement. Encouragement to keep faith in God, in others, and in myself. As I approach a new chapter in my life, I am relieved that I can take the lessons I've learned and apply them. I am so grateful for this opportunity. – Kelly Stein (college)

A life changing moment, that is how I would explain the Pittsburgh Project. To help out homeowners before thinking about yourself, and of course to feel empathy between your homeowner, group members, etc. Now, I feel almost like a new person and just think about everything in a different way. Pittsburgh was awesome, amazing, and a life changing moment. I can't wait till next year! – Katie Olsen (entering 8th grade)

The Pittsburgh Project was not a trip, but it was instead a life changing experience. It shows you that life is not just that small safe town you live in. It is a whole world just waiting to be made more and more beautiful. – Emma Davison (entering 7th grade).

I didn't think the trip would change me so much. I met an incredible amount of new people, from our own congregation and others. My views of Christianity have been altered and my walk with God became so much more. I feel that everything is so much more clear and I will remember the trip for a lifetime. – Kate Arcell (entering 9th grade).