



SPECIAL EDITION: Service Trip to New York City, June 19-24, 2011

The UCH Youth Group spent the week of June 19-24 in New York City. It was their fourth annual summer service trip, and this special edition of *The UCH Reporter* provides extended coverage. Please check out the bulletin board downstairs at Clover Lane for original artwork from the trip – this edition contains only a small sampling! Additional photographs at this URL: [NYC Photos](#)

Homelessness in NYC

From Monday through Thursday, the UCH group met each morning at the office of Youth Service Opportunity Project (YSOP), a Quaker-based organization founded in 1983. On the first day, all participants received general orientation to the program, information about homeless in New York City, and a bright blue T-shirt identifying them as a YSOP participant. Each day the various groups also received their specific work assignments.

Nearly 5,000 volunteers participate in YSOP work camps each year, with individual “tours of duty” lasting from a single day to a week. According to statistics provided by the organization, its volunteers touch the lives of more than 400,000 hungry and homeless people through their work in shelters, soup kitchens, schools, food and clothing banks and other direct-service institutions in New York City and in Washington, D.C., where it has a second office. Cognizant of the fact that most volunteers are unfamiliar with New York, YSOP provided specific and detailed instructions for using public transportation to reach each work location.

Soup Kitchens

Most days, the groups were assigned to different food-related support tasks at soup kitchens at locations ranging from the South Bronx to Queens and Manhattan. In Manhattan alone, there are 64 separate soup kitchens, supported by churches, synagogues and various nonprofit organizations. The largest (in terms of volume) is [Holy Apostles](#), which serves 13,000 meals per day, five days a week. Depending on the venue, tasks included unloading/packaging, cooking, serving, and clean-up. The volunteers had lunch on site. Similar to our Community Café on Market Street, the volunteers generally ate on site.

Facts on Homelessness & Hunger

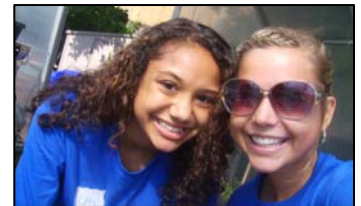
The Face of the Food Crisis in New York City

- More than 1 in 5 New Yorkers live in a “food insecure” household- a household where someone has gone hungry or faced the brink of hunger, sometimes chronically, within the last year.
- The number of New Yorkers experiencing difficulty affording food for themselves and their families has increased by 60 percent to approximately 3.3 million since 2003.
- 81.1% of agencies providing emergency food assistance reported feeding an increasing number of families with children over the course of 2009.
- More than one out of every five (21 percent) NYC residents standing in line at soup kitchens and food pantries are employed, and among them 57 percent work full time.



Other Assignments

In addition to supporting soup kitchens, the groups received several other assignments. One group helped clean the classrooms of an after-school program at a church. Another helped set up for a festival at McKinley's Children's Garden, an urban park created from a vacant lot about 20 years ago. One day, one of the groups was assigned to play with children at a homeless shelter. In point of fact, 77 percent of the shelter population in New York is families and children; the average length of residence is 11 months.



Chalice Circles

Each day they also met for small group Chalice Circles, where they journaled and discussed the feelings invoked by this spiritual journey of service. Journals include representative artwork, poetry,

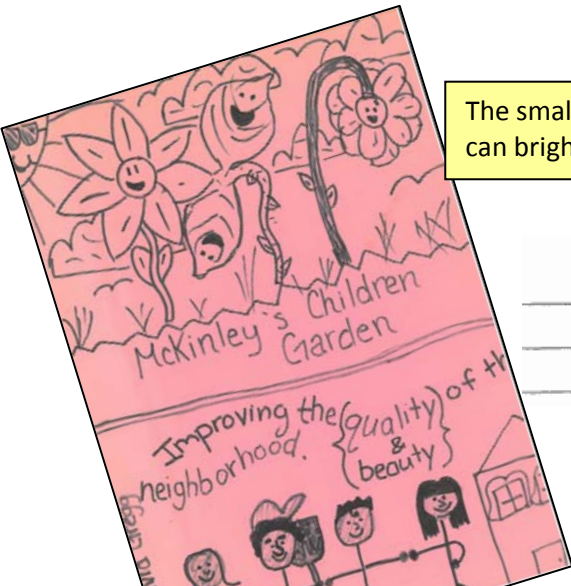
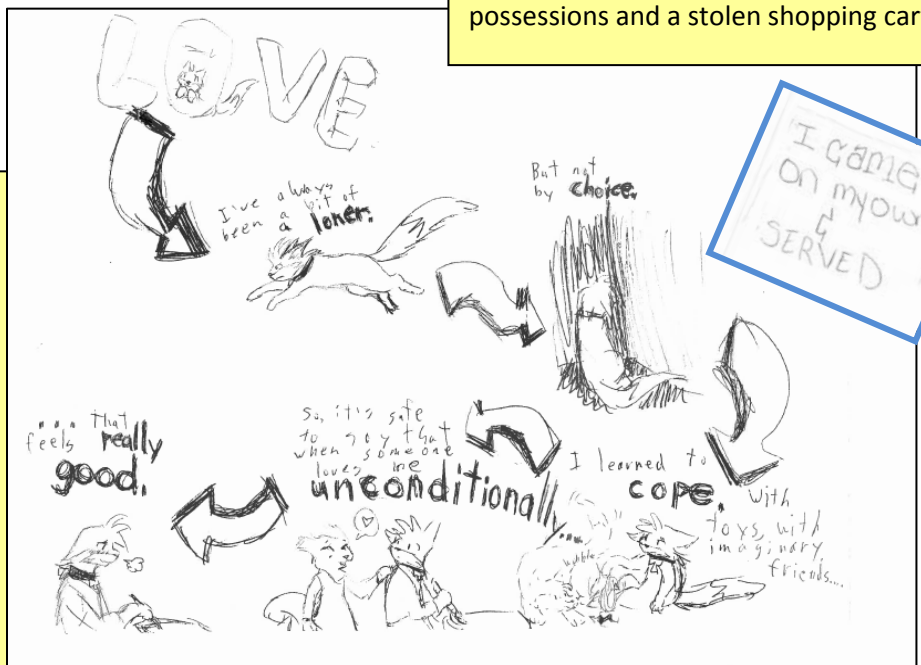
The smallest act of kindness from a stranger can brighten your day



I felt ~~like~~ like I had done something amazing

When life leaves you with a trashbag of possessions and a stolen shopping cart

I came on my own & SERVED



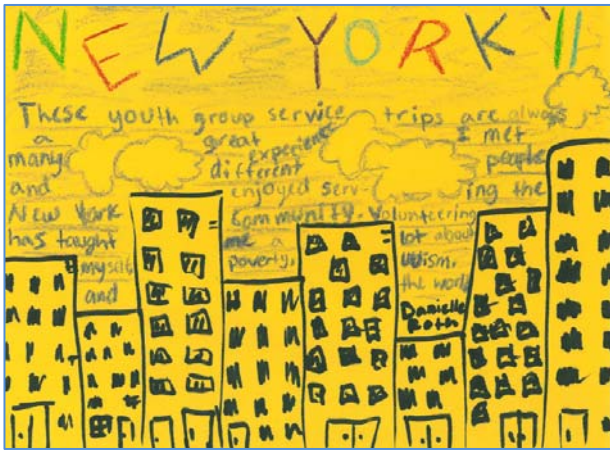
Fraternité Notre Dame

Heaven Working on Earth

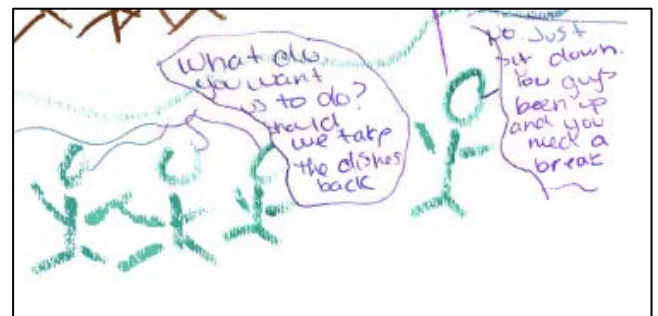
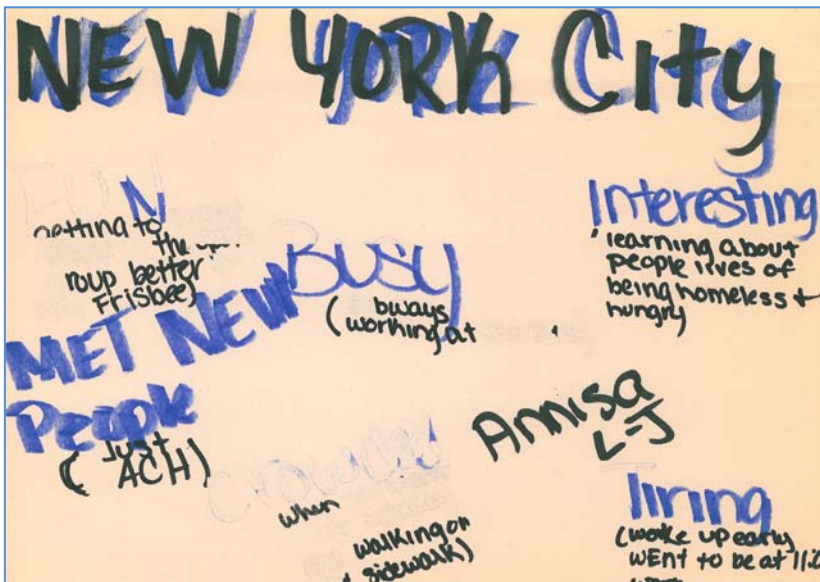
Dressed in black from head to toe
 Crinkles beneath their eyes
 Soft, but sturdy hands
 Cooking in a closet
 Serving all hours
 Smiles and stories shared between guests and I
 Manners galore and jobs aplenty
 The served, helping us clean up

They were born to serve
 One talented with French, Spanish & English
 The other Sister, French
 And a Spanish elder, keeping peace

Additional Reflections



These journeys have taught me to appreciate everything and to respect others. Many people need help.



Logistics

The group traveled to New York by Megabus, a new bus service with variable pricing, starting at \$1. Prices rise based on space available and the nearness of the dates of travel. Within the city, they traveled by subway and by foot. The group stayed at Hostelling International New York, where they had kitchen privileges.

megabus.com



Food

Over the course of the week, they shopped in Manhattan grocery stores for snacks and ingredients for spaghetti dinner; had pizza; dined with newly released inmates; and ate at a diner. Breakfast was generally at the hostel; noon meals were taken on-site at each group's assigned work location.



Dinner Party

The Doe Fund is a non-profit organization that provides a holistic, residential, work and job skills training program to help homeless individuals in New York City in their efforts to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society; 75% of program participants are former inmates.

On Tuesday evening the UCH group hosted a "dinner party" for guests from the Doe Fund. The youth made lasagna, garlic bread, salad, and brownies. Before dinner the ice was broken by playing board games and eating popcorn. xxx



Doing service changes us more than it changes those we are helping

Tourist Town

The youth had a scavenger hunt in Times Square on evening and played "ultimate Frisbee" in Central Park on another. They also had time for window-shopping and people watching. The group rode on the Staten Island Ferry, and they took a walk on the wild side...of Wall Street.



Attending the trip were Emily Alberici, Katy Alberici, Libby Bechtel, Cameron Brandon, Eric Bronder, Zach Cincotta, Orlando Forest, Olivia Gregg, Olivia Hayes, Annisa Lopez-Jacobs, Jazmin Montgomery, Alleyah Myers, ZoeRoane-Hopkins, Danielle Roth, Kaily Sweer, and Josh Thompson. Chaperones were Wendy Shaver, Peter Adams, and Marj Forster.

A Final Word...



From Wendy Shaver, tour organizer Directory of Youth Ministry:

About that slip of pink paper saying everyone helped? – well, I asked the kids to vote for a MVP of the trip because I had a free T-shirt I wanted to give someone. That was the only time that the group refused to cooperate (and they were asked to do a lot of difficult tasks during the week). They didn't think it was right to pick one person as being "better" than everyone else. I thought that was cool; I'm really proud of them.

