

Paying it forward at Garrison's River Resort

Story and photos by Lucas Smith

Rock Brook Church is paying it forward and the Youth Group certainly did just that this past weekend at Garrison's River Resort located in Historic Steelville, Missouri. Steelville has always been proud to have the title as the "Floating Capitol of Missouri." It's very rare in our society today that we see or experience a true blessing. Especially from an astonishing group of kind young men and women actively and happily giving back to a group of people and asking nothing in return.

Rock Brook Church has enjoyed Garrison's River Resort for several years. They first started visiting years ago in 1997 as a Spy Camp of fifth and sixth graders. What brought them back to Garrison's was all of the love according to the Youth Group. A trip to Garrison's is a highlight every summer for the Children's Ministry. Rock Brook has used Garrison's River Resort as a place to connect with each other year after year. The congregation is led by Senior Pastor Kelly Walter and his son Andrew Walter who is the Youth Pastor for Rock Brook Church located in Belton, Missouri.

This year Pastor Walter and his team of students decided to generously donate their time, services and supplies and remodel some of Garrison's lodging decks. Front and back porches were completely taken apart by hand, and then individually sanded and stained. The time and effort spent on the lodging units is remarkable.

Garrison's was proud to welcome this wonderful bunch of all ages to another exciting year of adventures. They were in for an experience of a lifetime and the best Home Cooking in the Ozark Mountains. Youth Volunteer Leader Kathy Ferro commented on the main objective for this mission was that "everyone was being connected in a positive way, it was not just about giving back but understanding the true meaning of the term and proving it". Pastor Walter commented that "this was a

mission of teaching and training the youth and truly paying it forward"; instilling values that will last these young men and women a lifetime.

High School Student Jamie Baum another Youth Volunteer Leader still has those same values and started coming to Garrison's on missions since she was in sixth grade. She has continued to teach and live the meaning of giving back, by making a difference in so many young teenagers' lives.

14 year old Dayana who was apart of the Youth Group was comically nicknamed "The Sanding Princess". She was on a mission for her team and apparently an even bigger mission of making sure all of the individual pieces of wood were sanded correctly.

When the group was asked what their top five favorite things were about Garrison's? After a thrilling stay, the Food, Activities and Staff were the overall response. Of course Fried Chicken, Homemade Mashed Potatoes with Extra Gravy was number 1 on the list.

Pastor Andrew Walter commented, "The most important thing our teens can do with their lives is to love. The bible sums up what we are supposed to do by simply saying "Love others as you love yourself" - Galatians 5:14b. If we cannot process in our minds that life is bigger than all of us and stop focusing on just ourselves all the time, then we miss the point of it all."

Besides all of the activities Garrison's has to offer, the most beloved thing among all, that brought them back year after year, was not just the staff but the general atmosphere. They have already planned their next trip for this July and will be back for another moving year at Garrison's River Resort. This week was nothing but laughter and smiles and a true testament that paying it forward is not only an endearing term, but with faith is also a proven meaningful fact.



Rock Brook Church Members are, front row, Kelli Fournier, Reece Tebbe, Rebekah Wratney, Caleb Smith and youth leader Kathey Ferro. Middle row, youth leader Jamie Baum, youth pastor Andrew Walter, Nick Ferro and Aaron Aeschliman. Back row, Colton Slover, Chloe Smith, Shiloh Holmes, Joy Sharp and Dayana Westergourd.

Two members of Rock Brook work hard to make improvements to a deck.