

Shelby Kolesar  
Mission Trip  
Obion, TN  
July 14-17

Reelfoot Rural Ministries is a mission program of the Memphis Conference of The United Methodist Church located in rural, Northwest Tennessee. Their four-county service area includes Lake, Obion and Dyer Counties of Tennessee and Fulton County Kentucky. This rural area surrounding Reelfoot Lake is an area of extreme poverty. Lake County, for instance, has the lowest "per capita" income of any county in Tennessee and is 32nd to the bottom of family income level in our nation. The combined lasting effects of farm mechanization, no factory employment, and a seasonal lake culture have left economic marks difficult to change.

**Mission Statement:**

"In Christian love, we seek to provide personal encouragement, material assistance, helpful training and spiritual guidance to children, the elderly and low-income families in rural Northwest Tennessee and Southwest Kentucky, in a manner that enhances self-esteem and encourages self-support"

St. John United Church of Christ Middle School Youth Group traveled to Obion, TN to participate in a work camp. Work camps provide no cost home repairs for the elderly and for other eligible area residents. Repairs include painting, roofing, repairing porches and floors, building steps and ramps, and a host of other projects. Occasionally groups do major remodeling projects. Each group furnishes all the tools and supplies for the project they select. Twenty four youth participated and were assigned two projects to complete: painting a house and constructing a wheel chair ramp.

Shelby Kolesar chose to work with the group who painted the house. A brief summary of the work they completed follows:

Day 1 (2PM-5PM): prep work: all youth worked to prepare the house for painting. Prep work included scraping old paint, scraping wrought iron porch railing paint, and scrubbing the entire house.

Day 2 (9AM-4PM): painting: all youth worked together to apply 2 coats of paint to siding, trim, and foundation. They also scrubbed the back of the house to remove all mold and mildew.

Day 3 (9AM-1PM): painting: all youth worked together to complete all painting, including the porch floor. The youth completed their assignment by cleaning up the work area and purchasing 2 hanging plants as a gift to the home owner.

During their time at the work camp, the youth spent time with the home owner. They discussed their purpose for providing assistance can be found in John 13:34-35: Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Each evening after work, the youth participated in worship and small group discussions.



Before



After