

IMPACT HOUSTON 2013



Chelsea

This year, Houston was an amazing experience. I had the opportunity to spend most of my time during the week with two second grade girls. They both spoke Spanish and very little English. To say that we had a language barrier would be a huge understatement. It took me until the end of the week to realize



that we had the most important thing in common: we were all there to worship God with all of our hearts. It didn't matter that we had to motion what we were trying to communicate. God knew that we were able to communicate perfectly because of what He had given us, a love for each other and a love for Him.

Denton

Houston was a great experience. Since the trip, I've had a new perspective on life because of working with kids that come from different family situations at Impact. Working with children on less than eight hours of sleep tested my patience to its limits. Because of this, I came back to Albuquerque with more patience. Although the challenges were great, the rewards of the trip greatly outnumbered the challenges.



Alicia

During Netherwood Park's most recent youth group trip to help at Impact Church of Christ in the big, humid city of Houston, Texas, I was moved as a person both inside and outside of my church. For starters, there were about one hundred and thirty kids who just loved you as soon as they saw you. I personally had five "little buddies" who just made me get attached to each one of them in an instant. There were also quite a few interns at Impact Church of Christ who were awesome at letting God's light shine through them. They had such an impact on not only the kids, but on different individuals in the youth groups of Downtown in Searcy, Arkansas, Netherwood Park, and others. During every "reading class" rotation that we had daily with the kids, it was just fantastic to witness how each child got better each day with either reading fluently, writing, or even identifying various words from a deck of cards. One last thing I would like to add is how relationships with kids developed so quickly while we were on routes either picking the kids up from their homes or even taking them home from a long day at VBS (Vacation Bible School). Impact was such an amazing, transforming experience!



During the course of the week that we were in Houston helping out at Impact, the kids that we helped were just hands down magnificent. There was never a dull moment with those kids, I promise! When the VBS first started, I remember some kids who weren't really wanting to participate. But after the first two or three days, they opened up to you and got attached. Most of all, the kids looked up to you and made you feel like you could make an impact in their lives. All of a sudden, you were the cool cat in town. Every child who wanted you to be their "big buddy" did every single thing that you did. If I could go back to Houston, I would be there in a heartbeat just to see those kids again!

The interns that Impact Church were just astounding. Most of the interns were so interactive with the kids and treated them like their own. You could tell that some interns knew a few kids from the years before at VBS or even outside of their wonderful congregation. The one thing I noticed that the interns never failed at was caring for each one of the kids individually. I just loved watching the interns from Impact reaching out to kids at the VBS!

MAX

The experience I experienced at IMPACT is something I will never forget. This was my first year so I came to Houston completely clueless of what to expect. This trip gave me a large range of opportunities and lessons to learn. I met lots of new people and created bonds with not only my youth group but with the kids as well. The only way I can really describe the trip is PURE AWESOMENESS!!

This trip showed me not only to be more grateful for what I have but also what it truly looks like to serve. I can't wait to go next year!



During the Houston trip, I got to be a part of a very fantastic event. I was able to help many children learn about God and got to show my leadership skills through many events. I was also given the opportunity to refine my leadership skills and perform them throughout the trip on events in which we needed to guide the children around Houston. The one thing that stood out to me the most was seeing all of the different home environments that the children came from. I never really appreciated some things in my life, until I went to Houston. Some children that I encountered didn't have a mom or dad, or sometimes either of their parents. I never really thought about living my life without my parents; I basically took my parents for granted until now. Overall, my experiences on the Houston trip made me truly realize how much God has blessed me.

Phillip



Anthony

I'm not sure that a book would be able to contain all of my experiences and emotions associated with the time that I was able to spend at and with Impact Church of Christ this past summer. Impact has and will forever hold an extremely special place in my heart since the time that I was first blessed to go there in October of 2001. Two words sum up how I feel and think about the people at Impact and the work in which they are involved. Those two words are passion and love. These people (my brothers and sisters in Christ) exude the greatest amount of love and passion for the Lord, for each other, and for the community around them and they inspire others who come under their sphere of influence to be and do the same.



While I could share story after story about how our group was blessed by multiple individuals at Impact and in Houston, words don't have the ability to capture even a fraction of those things in my opinion. This community of faith loves the Lord unabashedly and extravagantly and they exhibit this love in passionate ways. They look forward to loving the Lord. It is not an obligation or something that is a good idea. It is at the core of who they are and as a result, this core frees them to love in lavish and beautiful ways. I was/am deeply challenged, convicted, and encouraged with not only what I witnessed but also how to bring what I witnessed in Houston back to daily life here in Albuquerque.

I want to sincerely thank each teen and chaperone who accompanied us on this adventure to Houston. I have been blessed to go on many different trips with numerous different groups and I could not have been more proud of a group of young people and adults. I want this congregation here to know that Netherwood is being well represented regarding their love and faith in and for God as well as for others. Thank you to each of you here who although you did not accompany us physically to Houston most definitely accompanied us through your thoughts, prayers, and monetary donations. We love you deeply and are so grateful to daily partner with you in proclaiming the kingdom of God here in Albuquerque and this past summer in Houston.

C A S S I E



My experience helping out at the VBS in Houston this year was amazing! I was able to meet so many amazing people that I am already looking forward to seeing next summer. I would strongly recommend going to Houston to anyone wondering if they should. I was able to have so many experiences that were simply spectacular while on this trip, such as having my own little buddy, Oscar, and going on a trip to the museum with him. I was able to build relationships and get closer to many people in the

cause of this wonderful trip. I am very glad I went on this trip because I was able to get closer to God, build new and strengthen old relationships, and have wonderful experiences with wonderful people.

I originally didn't make the decision to go to Impact for the second time. That decision was made for me the year before by Anthony. I had to honestly ask myself "Do I really want to go on another one of Anthony's shenanigans? " But after thinking about the first year and comparing the way I left for Houston to the way I came back, I started packing. I came back from that trip a different person, almost the complete opposite of what I was before. And I realized that while this year was better for me, I could use some extra help. There aren't many church-goers in Virginia, and of those people there is an extremely small Christian presence. The church I currently go to has no youth program, because it has virtually no youth. I'm one of three teenagers, and the other two only show up around Christmas and Easter. So you can forget encouragement. It's interesting to see how much a person can lose their way just by not having that extra little bit of help. I had no one to really talk to about the fact that I was slowly slipping away from the church. I was so far away that even when I saw that I had almost completely "left my post," I didn't care.

Sometime in April, I was staring at the wall. I was sitting on a couch, 4 o'clock in the morning, just staring at a wall. I somehow started thinking about what being a Christian means, and what it meant to me. I remembered how I used to be, why I got baptized, and why I went to church. I realized then that I was not living the life that God gave me to live. So the next day I jumped on the computer and looked up what the Netherwood youth group had planned for the summer. I read about the planned Impact trip, and got on the phone with Anthony to get all the details. A month later I was in Houston, and I saw how VBS changed those kids' lives. When I went in the morning to pick them up, I saw where they lived, and being in



Ben

the inner city, it wasn't the greatest. But these kids were so happy to go to VBS despite how they lived, that it was hard not to punch myself in the face. God has given me incredible opportunities, and I just took them in like I was entitled to them. I didn't care where they came from, or who gave them to me. I took the little things for granted. Those kids were just happy to have someone to talk to. All they wanted from us was to play or listen or something like that. It was really humbling. And after the first day, I didn't feel dead inside anymore. I was a Christian again, and I remembered why I go to church and where my things come from. It was an amazing experience and I was sad to leave. I had heard about how the program changed these kids' lives, but it also changed mine. It sounds cheesy, but I know for a fact that it changed mine.

I owed my life to these kids and to that program. I know this because about a week after I got back to Virginia, some people I used to hang out with wanted me to go party with them. They wanted to pick me up, but my partying days were over. I made up some lame excuse and they went on without me. About 3 AM the following morning, that same car full of teens got in a wreck. They were flying down the main highway and didn't slow down enough to make a turn. They flew off the highway and into the woods. The car smashed into a massive tree and then rolled down the hill. The driver and front passenger died on impact. The rear passenger died on the way to the hospital. I found all this out when I went to school about 2 weeks early to help with the incoming 9th grade cadets. There were 4 seats in the car. 3 of the seats were occupied, and one was my empty seat. When I heard all this I realized that one, I loved God A LOT; and two, I was sent on the trip for a purpose. I came on the Impact trip this year because it changed my life the first time I went. I didn't have the expectation that it would do the same this year, and I didn't need it to. I went this year to help teach kids about God, and to give them the small human comforts that we all take for granted. They just wanted to talk, or play, or receive a hug. Actually, most of the time they wanted all three. I wanted to give back to the program that gave so much to me. That's why I went to Impact this year.



Laura

This year was my third summer going to Impact Church of Christ in inner city Houston, Texas. Every year, this church body never ceases to amaze me. Their service is more outpouring than any other church I have ever seen. I love going to Impact every summer and being able to take part in this fantastic love and sacrifice of self. This congregation truly lives out their name. They impact the community around them in a variety of ways. From the homeless ministries, to the half-way house, to the bible study at the home for the mentally disabled, to the children's VBS, I cannot imagine an area in which this congregation would not be willing to serve.

I love going to this church because not only are these people being served by the church, but they are the church. Every Sunday morning, you could look around and see people from all walks of life. Many of Impact's members are in poverty, yet this does not hinder them from giving what they can.

In addition to this contagious church body impacting their community, they impact me every time I visit. They make me want to serve in a way that is not just a week-long mission trip, but an actual lifestyle. I want to live as Jesus did and serve as He did. I want to find people in need and go down to their level instead of expecting them to come up to where I view myself to be. We are all in need of Christ's love, and none of us should view ourselves as higher than another. We need to touch those who our society views as untouchable. Just like Impact, our churches should represent this, and so should our personal lives.

Caious

This was my very first year going and participating at Impact Houston's VBS. The experience was great beyond measure. Being able to see the kids smile and laugh had to have been the greatest experience of all. I can remember when I was a kid and I was always in the house being harassed or abused by my mother. We were not very wealthy or allowed to go many places. Knowing now that there is a place for kids to go and be loved and cherished at no cost is like taking all the pain of feeling unloved out of my past. I know they will feel loved and cherished and be able to learn about God at Impact. If I would have had this experience when I was younger, it would have been the greatest part of my summer.

I also got to see where many of the kids lived by going on routes. It was very eye opening to see what they have compared to what I have now. Now I know that the Lord has truly blessed me with a good home and financial situation. Many of these kids live in run down houses and have little to nothing. Another think that I noticed when going on these routes was that these kids loved what they had and loved coming to VBS. I grew attached to many of these kids and would love to go back and see them, especially my little buddy Joshua. What I really liked about this experience was being able to see the kids happy to learn about God and read his word. I also really enjoyed seeing them be happy about reading and learning in general. I wouldn't have traded this particular week for anything. I loved the experience and all that it entailed. I will now try to go to Impact every chance I get to help with the VBS. For anyone who is reading this, I advise that you go to Impact and help with this experience that will be life changing.



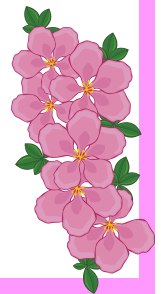
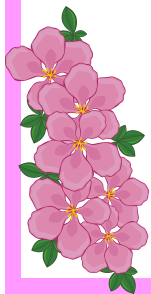
JOSH

IT WAS A GREAT PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO GO TO HOUSTON AGAIN THIS YEAR. THIS WAS MY SECOND TIME TO GO AND I HAD A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE. THE AMOUNT OF WORK AND EFFORT THAT OUR TEENS PUT INTO THIS TRIP WAS AMAZING. I REALLY ENJOYED SEEING THE SMILES ON THE CHILDREN'S FACES AS THEY LEARNED ABOUT GOD. THE SINGING IN THE MORNING AND AFTERNOONS WAS UPLIFTING. IT WAS A BLESSING TO BE ABLE TO HELP THE KIDS READ AND YOU FELT A GREAT DEAL OF ACCOMPLISHMENT WHEN YOU GOT TO SEE THE KIDS IMPROVE IN THEIR READING THROUGH OUT THE COURSE OF THE WEEK. IF YOU EVER GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO TO HOUSTON I SUGGEST YOU TAKE THAT CHANCE. IT REALLY OPENS YOUR EYES TO WHAT A CHURCH CAN DO WHEN IT GIVES ALL IT HAS TO ITS COMMUNITY TO HELP BETTER THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THAT COMMUNITY. I WAS SO HAPPY TO WORK WITH A GREAT GROUP OF TEENS WHO SHOWED CHRIST TO THE CHILDREN THEY WERE TEACHING. I HOPE THAT I GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO AGAIN NEXT YEAR. IT IS A BLESSING TO BE APART OF THIS GROUP AND CHURCH THAT GIVES SO MUCH AND SHOWS PEOPLE THE LOVE THAT GOD HAS FOR THEM.



Delaney

Houston was a wonderful experience. I think about all the kids I met almost daily. Every day I think and pray about my little buddies Azul and Racquel. They stood out to me from day one. Azul could only speak a little English, was shy and had attachment issues, but she was so sweet she would look for me in the morning on her bus. When she saw me, she would smile and give me a hug. Racquel was a talker, she was outgoing and would hang out with everyone. Azul and Racquel would try to sit in my lap and talk to me in English or Spanish and just smile. Whether it was being thankful for their lunch or just being happy, they taught me to enjoy the simple things in life and look on the bright side of things no matter what situation I'm in. I cant wait to go back next year.



Dixie

When Grant asked about Houston and what it was like — I couldn't hold back the tears or the groaning of my soul. How was Houston? It's a question I'm trying to answer for myself. **Houston moved me; it changed my vision.** *In some ways you could say I found deliverance...* I've seen how sin smothers children and selfishness steals human dignity and I've seen how apathy infects the hearts of the comfortable. How can I not be moved when babies are drowning in a sea of poverty? I see with my own eyes the strung out, wasted lives of the poverty of sin, sleeping under bridges. I've known how apathy is a disease. I'm angry at me, angry at how much I want comfortable more than I want Christ. I want to forget that scene of people waiting for the doors of Impact to be opened wide, to willing servants who willingly touch the hearts of the grimy and soiled people that need washed by Jesus. I want to forget the daily effort and struggle of the poor so I don't have to wash feet. **I'd rather "talk" about what it means to follow Christ then take up my cross.** I'm angry at the apathy infecting my heart. Why have I turned a blind eye to the needy rather than turned to the needy and become like Christ? Houston helped me see the difference. As Christ followers, we're either responding with indifference or with intercession, with apathy or aid. You can't look into the face of the poor and remain unmoved and unimpressed. Houston showed me that our lives will always be your response. And if the body of Christ is fused together with His blood, how does His family live so detached and independently? We are called to be one and in spite of that we live estranged from one another — like the generous giving of grace is strange? Are we entangled in Christ and loving His family or are we entangled in culture and comfort and collections?



Job 29:13-15 says "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came on me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame..."

In the family of Christ, we wear justice for the poor. In the Body of Christ, our lives should be clothed in caring like our bodies are covered in clothing. When I think about all the people I met at Impact, all the people who lived like Jesus rather than talking about Jesus, so that their lives left an impression that impacted me exceedingly.

Men and women living the calling of Luke 9:23.

I look at my life. This one life I've been given. I think how I step right over the rubble and beggars and garbage and gangs and just get right out; go home, to safe and comfortable. I think of the one life Jesus led. He was homeless and poor, He left the throne of Heaven and lived among the beggars, the rejects, the gangs and the prostitutes, He touched the infected and ate with the rubble. He reached out to me. And who do I reach out to? Those are the questions I learned to ask in Houston. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He left His palace to live in the gutters. He threw wide the doors to His kingdom and offered us a seat at the table, a place in the Kingdom. In Houston, I learned that you don't stay in the palace if you want anyone to find deliverance—especially yourself.

Becca

This year at Impact was absolutely amazing, just like the past two years I have gone. Although I have been on this trip previously I am always amazed at what I see when I return. The people at Impact are such a loving group of people. They have blessed me more than words could ever say and for that I am forever grateful. Spending time with the children at Impact is always my favorite part. I have been with the same group of kids for three years now and I love getting to grow up with them. My first year at Impact I worked with the kindergarteners, and as they moved up in school I moved with them. This year those same children I began working with just 3 short years ago are going to be in second grade!



I am so humbled by the children that come to Impact. For the longest time I have gone on this trip to serve the community of the “less fortunate.” This year I went to hang out and work with children who have so much more than I will ever have. We often times focus on what the children don’t have in terms of material possessions, but this year I recognized just how much they have in terms of love and friendship. I have really begun to think about what my opportunities at Impact are. God has placed it on my heart to see how I can bring glory to Him in the Impact community. This terrifies me! I say all the time that I would love to be an intern at Impact, but once I come home that all fades. I place it out of my mind, not because I wouldn’t love to do it, but because I am terrified of leaving my home and place of comfort to live in Houston for a summer. Anthony has always said “You can’t walk on water unless you get out of the boat.” This has struck me in a way that I cannot continue to ignore so I will be applying to be an Impact intern very soon. Prayers would be greatly appreciated as I step into this new and exciting adventure!



Kathy

I am so thankful that I was able to go to Houston again this year. It is difficult to put in to words how meaningful and rewarding it was. The Impact Church of Christ is truly an amazing group of people. When you witness and experience all of the love that they pour out to these kids, as well as the entire community, you realize how big and powerful God's love is. I was once again humbled and honored to be a part of such a wonderful cause and work alongside such a wonderful group of people. It was such a blessing to watch our teens and chaperones work so hard and give so much of themselves to help others. Everyone did such an amazing job and truly showed these kids God's love.

Even though we were exhausted (and hot!) most of the time, we had so much fun and grew closer to each other. Every experience of this trip was a memorable one for me—long car rides, driving in the crazy Houston traffic, sharing meals together, sleeping in the church, working with the



Arkansas youth group (Interlude!), joking, laughing, fellowshiping and praising God together. I am so thankful for each teen and chaperone that went. It was such a blessing to spend this time with you, and I am already looking forward to next year!



Seth

I know it probably sounds corny, but my trip to Houston was pretty definitive in my life. I have to admit at first I didn't know what to expect, and quite frankly I was mostly going because my family was. I worked with the Kindergarten group, and they really softened me up. My entire perspective changed. Even though some of the kids that I had to work with were trouble at times, I didn't want to leave. The trip

was an awesome experience for me, and allowed me to get away from the world and back on track with God. The people I met were both unique and incredibly refreshing. The energy and excitement was a blessing. I made new friends and really bonded with the kids. I also learned how to teach them, which is a lot harder than it seems, but very rewarding. This was also an amazing opportunity to grow closer to the youth group. The week went by so fast, and by the second day I was already hoping to come back next year. This mission trip to Houston is definitely one that I will remember and cherish forever.



I had an amazing time at Impact this year. This was my second year to go, and I loved getting to see all of my little buddies again. I also enjoyed growing closer to the youth group and spending time with them. We worked together with a group from Arkansas, and it was great getting to know them better. Another highlight for me was going to Liberty Island and singing with the energetic people there. This was such a fun and rewarding trip, and I am really looking forward to going again next year.

Tanner



Houston Team Members

Karlene, Chelsea, Denton, Alicia, Max, Ruthie, Anotonia, Phillip, Anthony, Sunshine, Cassie, Ben, Laura
Caious, Emily, Luis, Matthew, Estevan, Marissa, Caleb, Danielle, Ramona, Monique, Courtney, Josh, Delaney
Dixie, Becca, Kathy, Seth, Tanner

CALEB

My experience in Houston was good. This was my first time to go to Impact. I didn't really know what to expect. My favorite part was the kids and seeing their eagerness to learn about God. I was also moved by the interns and their devotion to God and to the kids. In all, I enjoyed the trip and will look forward to going next year.





This was my second year attending Impact Houston and to say this year was just as wild, crazy and fun as last year would be an understatement. Our theme for VBS was "Rooted in Christ" and trying to incorporate our theme into crafts, games, science projects, cooking and skits was a hard task. But we pulled through with help from our awesome support group from Searcy, Arkansas. Every day of VBS was fun. It was great to see the smiling faces of the kids, to sing songs with them, and to read with them in reading class. We were able to go on the bus routes with them and got to see where they live.

I also had a lot of fun before and after VBS. I had the pleasure of spending time with my fellow youth group members. We were able to see a Houston Astros game, sing with great people at Liberty Island, hang out at Marble Slab eating ice cream, and eat pizza and play pool at Star Pizza. We also rocked the van at each stop light, played card games and talked, and had plenty of laughs in the van. I would just like to say thanks to the interns, chaperones, youth ministers, and elders for making that trip possible. I look forward to having a new adventure next year.

Ramona

My week in Houston was inspiring. The work on behalf of Impact Church of Christ in serving their community was remarkable, truly a beacon of light. I had the privilege to witness their amazing ministry firsthand as they actively reached out and did not just wait for individuals to come their way.

They coordinate a six-week long VBS, feed the less fortunate, provide intervention for those struggling with drug & alcohol dependency, and minister to people in assisted living facilities. Their pursuit of God's creation is genuine and evident as they impart light and hope to many who are searching.



VBS was quite an adventure and quite a challenge as well. The dedication of all those involved is to be commended. Six weeks of commitment (all voluntary) to 120 or so kids says a lot about a person. The children were really bright and energetic, to say the least. They were good kids from a number of challenging circumstances, but that didn't affect their love and enthusiasm for Jesus. The kids taught me so much about patience, trust, acceptance and love in a way that is unconditional and Christ-like. My favorite memory of VBS was the singing. It didn't matter where or with whom we were singing, it was all AWESOME!

I am thankful to God for the opportunity to serve alongside other Christian individuals within the Impact mission. It was great to watch our kids step up and claim ownership of this wonderful event. Personally, this trip allowed for much growth mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I enjoyed getting to know our church family better. I would encourage anyone considering serving on a mission trip to go to Houston. It will certainly "impact" your life.

Marissa

I have been to Houston for the past 3 summers. I've realized that going was the best thing to do. The first year I went, I had 2 little buddies named April and Leslie. When I first met them they were in 1st grade. They are now about to enter the 3rd grade. I would recommend teens to go to Houston with us because I saw how each year my buddies grew up and how each year they would run to me and smile and tell me how much they missed me!



This week with the kids was filled with a lot of fun! We had dance parties, ticket time, field trips, cooking class, drama class, science class, art class, and list goes on! Every year we have reading classes for 45 minutes. The most common reaction to that is shock and doubt the kids will listen for that long! This past year, my group had a good reading teacher with good ideas! We read scary stories with a flash light and played games with all the vocabulary words! So, to be honest, each year gets better and better! I had 5 buddies and I still remember them all and all the things I learned at Houston! This trip was so much fun and I can't imagine even missing one year! I thank God for letting me have this experience each year!