

Sierra Service Project 2014 Newsletter



40 Years of Serving
Youth & Young Adults

Celebrating SSP's 40th year 1975-2015

2015 Board of Directors in front of the T-shirt quilt that hangs in SSP's entry.



Jessie Frossenkemper stands with Lula, a homeowner, in Tsaile, Arizona in 2014.



Eric Clem, originally from Escondido, California, was an early staffer in the history of SSP. He worked for several summers and was a Site Director at the lone site in 1978. In 1979, in his early 20s, he was killed in a Jeep accident. Following his death, a scholarship fund was set up by family and friends in his honor. This fund formed the initial basis of SSP's Endowment Fund. The Endowment currently has a balance of \$67,625.

Eric Clem stands with Nick, a homeowner, in Big Pine, California in 1978.



By Rick Eaton, Executive Director

This year, Sierra Service Project marks its 40th anniversary. This is a good opportunity to reflect on the values that continue to inspire all of us — all of you — who make up the SSP community.

Here are some of the values and beliefs I think make this community and organization fun, exciting, and life-changing:



Worth

We believe that young people really matter and are worthy of the time, energy, and love of adults.

Faith

We have a conviction that young people build strong and authentic Christian faith through acts of service.

Trust

We trust in one another. For example, we trust that teenagers can safely use power tools and that young adults can lead with wisdom and grace.

Transformation

We know that change is possible. We believe that low-income communities are strengthened and families are helped when young people repair homes and do other types of service with joy and enthusiasm. We know that transformation, in small and large ways, happens during every interaction in the SSP experience.

Community

We believe in community, in people coming together to learn from and help one another.

I thank you for being part of our community; for giving your time, your energy, your financial donations and your prayers to this community.

The Sierra Service Project community has existed for 40 years because of people like you and thousands of other supporters. May God bless and keep you!

**"I thank you for being part of our community;
for giving your time, your energy, your financial
donations and your prayers to this community."**

Navajo Nation Tsaile, Arizona

**By Cate Lycurgus, Staff
Good Samaritan United
Methodist Church**

These last few months after a summer in Tsaile, I find it difficult to adequately relate the experience, and never know how to begin.

To do it justice — with the desert's unique green and stark red-rock beauty, the depth of Navajo gazes, the simultaneous playfulness and pressing pain that many youth carry — feels impossible. I do not know how to speak the exhaustion of toting concrete, or the joys of leading large group discussions with gusto, nor how to touch on the threads of spirit holding us at the canyon's edge, the closeness we felt in uncertainty of the future, amidst the certainty of our Creator.

This summer, as we explored what it means to “speak up,” we tried to parse out words of life from words of despair and hopelessness that seem to bombard us constantly. We focused on hearing and discerning God's will, on truly absorbing words of abundant life, and on the ways we are called to make them echo. With all of our ramp-building and fence-erecting and onion-chopping and story-telling and guitar-singing, I did not want our community to end.

**“We focused on hearing and discerning God's will,
on truly absorbing words of abundant life,
and on the ways we are called to make them echo.”**

I know I am continually asking for God to guide me and use me, constantly asking to hear His voice of love and assurance and direction — maybe that makes me needy, or maybe faithful, if I can actually remain still enough to hear Him and trust He will give me the words, the voice, and the resources to speak up and out. At the same time I am coming to realize the words are not mine, those I write or speak, and it is God who provides the words we need. As we continue this autumn, growing, serving, preparing for next year as well, my prayer for us all is that we are able to be quiet enough to listen to all the ways God is speaking to us and through us of His love.



Youth installs siding on a storage shed.

Walker River Indian Reservation Schurz, Nevada

**By Rev. Alison Hendley, Counselor
San Rafael First United Methodist Church**

This summer I took a group of combined middle and high school youth to SSP for the first time. We went to Walker River, and none of us knew what to expect. The thing that struck me most is the way the youth bonded so instantly. The 40 of us there that week were from 11 different churches, and no one knew each other very well, but soon I could not tell who had come from where.

As my work group gathered that first night there was some awkwardness, but it was not long before we were sharing from our hearts. Each youth spoke of something in their life that had been, or was, hard to overcome. Some heartbreak or struggle that was trying to shape them one way, even as they were fighting to turn things around and make a new, Godly way that broke old family patterns.

**“I don’t know what happened but my son has returned
a different child. He felt fully accepted for who he is.”**

It was humbling to be a part of this group of six strangers who were willing to go to such depths to make a difference for their future, even as they were making a physical difference for another stranger as we worked on her house. The mom of a boy from my youth group had this to say:

“I don’t know what happened but my son has returned a different child. He felt fully accepted for who he is, not judged for those places he doesn’t feel he fits, and as though he can make a difference in the world.”



Smith River, California

**By Sandra Jerabek, Community Contact
Tolowa Dunes Stewards**

The “Tolowa Coast,” named to honor indigenous Tolowa Dee-ni’ Indians, is 11,000 public acres of open and forested dunes and extensive lagoons, ponds and wetlands. Tolowa Dunes State Park and the Lake Earl Wildlife Area hold natural and cultural resources of great significance, and offer exceptional biodiversity and refuge for wildlife.



Full group dune restoration with the Tolowa Dunes Stewards.

One of the biggest threats to the biodiversity of this area is invasive European beachgrass, which creates a sterile desert of spiky grass. It destroys the homes of wild creatures and nothing will eat it — it must be removed!

This summer, two different groups of SSP volunteers helped battle this threat, clearing half an acre of new habitat for native, endangered dune wildlife! SSP accomplished an incredible amount of work, donating 658 hours to this ongoing restoration project and breaking the record for most number of people on a single outing — 73!

**“SSP volunteers helped battle this threat,
clearing half an acre of new habitat for native,
endangered dune wildlife!”**

Participants learned about endangered species and Tolowa culture, and got to enjoy lunch on beach. The trips were guided by Tolowa Dunes Stewards, a program of Smith River Alliance. To date, SSP volunteers were some of the happiest volunteers Tolowa Stewards has encountered — enthusiastic about the work, with many teams delightfully singing their way through the day!

Chiloquin, Oregon

**By Daniel Gollery, Youth
St. Patrick's Episcopal Church**

When the chance came to attend Sierra Service Project as an individual youth, I jumped on the opportunity. My congregation does not have many youth, and I had not had a service experience in a few years. I had no idea what to expect. My family has been involved with SSP for many years – my aunt was one of the first site directors



Middle school youth installs decking for a set of stairs.

(Janet McKeithen) – so many of the stories I had heard were of the old days. When I arrived in Chiloquin, the other youth were more familiar with each other, being from a few congregations, but thanks to the efforts of veteran youth, counselors and staff, I did not feel at all like an outsider. Work on the project was brilliant. My group worked fast, and had a great deal of fun.

“SSP has all the elements that many people do not get in their common life, and it is an opportunity unlike any other.”

Our cooks were fantastic, and having fresh, tasty food all week was well worth the hard work. Food preparation was one of the key social times. If a youth didn't have something to do they could always lend a hand in the kitchen, which thanks to the cooks, was never a quiet place. Nor was the chapel a quiet place in the evenings. We had three keyboardists and a couple of ukulele players. We had a Native American speaker on Thursday, and the groups assigned to each evenings' study were always seeking some new and unusual take on the day's topic. Nothing was boring.

As a whole, SSP was one of the best things I did all summer. The camp seems almost insane as a concept: as my father (Martin Gollery) once said bluntly, “SSP is a program where you go out into the middle of nowhere for a week, sleep on the floor, and do hard labor all day. And you pay for it.” But despite its counter-intuitive prospects, the Project works, and works well. SSP has all the elements that many people do not get in their common life, and it is an opportunity unlike any other. I cannot honestly say that I know anybody who would not enjoy a week as a youth.

Stockton, California

By Jerron Jordan
Community Organizer

Working with the Sierra Service Project was an enriching and awe-inspiring experience. I often tell people that the greatest investment in our economic future is to allow the younger generation to be civilly involved. Not just involved in only one part of society either.

Full group clean up of Mormon Slough led by Jerron.



**“Peeling back the layers of perception,
socioeconomic status, stereotypes, and faith.”**

In the words of the wise “Shrek,” society is like an onion; it has layers. Often times we have to pull back several of those layers before we get to the root of the problem.

The Sierra Service Project did exactly that. Peeling back the layers of perception, socioeconomic status, stereotypes, and faith. The sheer connectivity of the systematic approach taken by the team that I was blessed to work with, week in and week out, was simply magical.

Through the tears, chants, hugs, gloves, trash bags, and long lines of mini-vans, I have come to cherish the values and principles that SSP continues to instill in its beloved family. If I had to do it all over again... I wouldn't change a thing.

One quarter of our volunteers in Stockton work at Boggs Tract Community Farm.



Abigail cleans up a vacant lot with the Coalition for Responsible Community Development.



Los Angeles, California

By Abigail Fuesler, Youth
Aldersgate United
Methodist Church

When I reflect on Sierra Service Project, there is one word that I always think of: community.

Time and time again, I experience loving, accepting communities at SSP. These spectacular communities of

strangers are built in just one week. Out of the many camps that I have participated in, I cannot find one that builds such a close-knit, diverse, inclusive group of people in such a short amount of time, and that is part of what makes SSP special.

**“Time and time again, I experience loving,
accepting communities at SSP.”**

I have met teenagers from other denominations and from different states. I've worked alongside people two years younger than me and others forty years older. There are many layers to SSP communities, be it the staff and their quirks, the church you're traveling with and your history, your work group, or the stories that are shared when everyone returns from a worksite. I knew after my very first day that the SSP community was one I wanted to return to summer after summer.



Pratap from Walnut Creek UMC, works on a storage shed for a nonprofit that provides transitional housing.

Alternative Breaks

**By Brittany Allen, Young Adult
Central Washington University**

I was first introduced to Sierra Service Project last year by our United Methodist campus ministry, Central Washington University Wesley, and going on an Alternative Break seemed preferable to going home to sit around my parents' house for a week. This year it was just a given that I was going.



Brittany and Brigitta build garden boxes at Dignity Village in Portland.

Personally, I am a journalist and a photographer because I want to help people share their stories in the most authentic way I can and to educate others on the topics raised by those individual testimonies. Besides the spiritual renewal SSP trips provide, I feel like it also allows me some practice in this concept of, for lack of a better label, "philanthropic photojournalism."

**"SSP has consistently renewed not only
my faith, but my love for what I am doing."**

People should know about places like Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon. They are a community of people who most would write off for what they don't have instead of realizing what they do have. Their living conditions may not be the social norm, but together, and with some help from organizations in the area, they've created homes for themselves.

Stories like these, showcases of determination and good will, are the reason I love being involved with SSP and also how SSP has consistently renewed not only my faith, but my love for what I am doing.

A work team refreshes a school garden at Pacific Elementary School!



Weekends of Service

**By Henry Foote, Staff
Episcopal Diocese of
El Camino Real**

My first Weekend of Service in Sacramento was also my first time being a staff member for SSP. During that weekend, I was given the opportunity to work alongside middle school youth at a local elementary school's garden. I was so

impressed with how diligently the youth worked. It was surely an inspiring sight to see. Although the weekend felt like such a short amount of time, there was never a shortage of positive energy, hard work, and fun. Just as with any SSP summer week, there was a common sense of togetherness, community, and love in doing service work throughout my time at the Weekend of Service.

Nicaragua

Laughing children and sweating adults, mud and rain, concrete and rebar, a visit to a beautiful lake and a steaming volcano – these things are all part of the SSP experience in Nicaragua!

This year two teams consisting of thirty-six individuals worked alongside local community members to build a classroom addition at Villa Japon Learning Center, a small rural school. The Nicaragua program is a life-changing experience of service and cultural immersion.

Young adults work side-by-side with local community members in Nicaragua.



2014 SSP Statistics

SSP volunteers completed 138 projects for:



65 Families

&



35 Community Organizations



48 Painting Projects

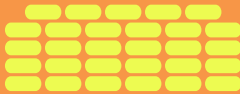


17 Sets of Stairs

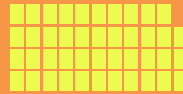


7 Wheelchair Ramps

Building materials cost \$62,946, including:



29 tons of concrete



215 gallons of paint

Food to fuel our volunteers cost \$60,832, including:

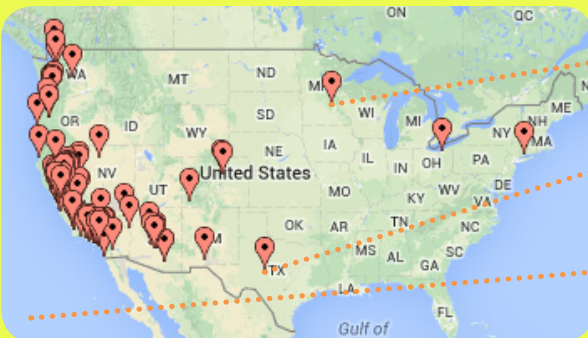


14,000 eggs



1,500 loaves of bread

125 churches from 6 denominations sent teams to SSP:



Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, MN

Emmanuel Episcopal Church in San Angelo, TX

Kailua United Methodist Church in Kailua, HI

SSP Impact on Summer Staff 2014 Survey Results

Last summer SSP hired **42** young adult staff members. In 2014, 205 summer staff alumni were surveyed. The results show the long-term impact that working for SSP had in their lives. We are honored to have had these dedicated leaders work for Sierra Service Project. They have continued to serve others in their careers and free-time.



4 out of every **10** staffers worked for **three or more years** on staff.

Over **85%** reported that their SSP staff experience helped them to develop **leadership, teamwork, and problem solving skills.**



60% have worked for another **non-profit,**



and **55%** have worked for **faith-based organizations.**



1 in **3** has lived and/or worked in a low income community in the **U.S.**

1 in **5** has lived and/or worked in a low income community **abroad.**



Over **60%** are currently involved in a church community.



15% have attended **seminary**



70% volunteer on a regular basis



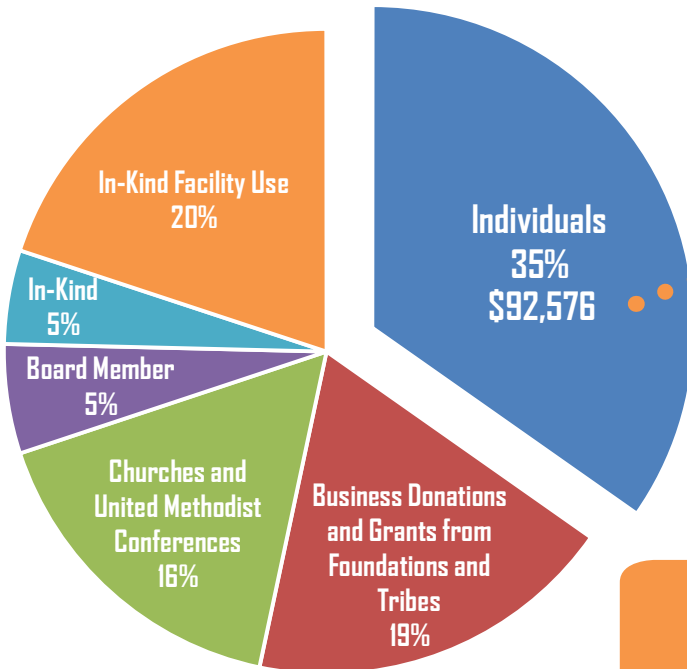
60% donate money on a regular basis



over **1/3 volunteer** on a regular basis for an organization dedicated to **youth development or social justice**

2014 Donations

All donations from October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014



In 2014, SSP gave \$50,000 in scholarships to 800 participants.

Donations make up **24%** of Sierra Service Project's budget. Without these donations, we would have to raise the fees that youth pay to participate by at least **\$100**.

In 2014, **360** donors gave **\$266,467** in financial contributions, in-kind donations, and donated facility use!

Over **80** volunteers gave their time by towing trailers, finishing summer projects, helping us remodel and move into our new office, sorting T-shirts, loading vehicles full of bulk food and building materials, and assembling mailings throughout the year.

We love our volunteers!

If you would like to volunteer your time, please call us at (916) 488-6441.



Thank You 12xSSP Monthly Donors

86 Monthly Donors
Give \$25,824
Annually
\$25 Average
Monthly Donation



Give **\$40** per month to help us meet our goal of **40** new 12xSSP donors during SSP's **40th year** of service! Sign up on the 'Support' tab on our website to give automatically each month through your debit or credit card.

www.sierraserviceproject.org

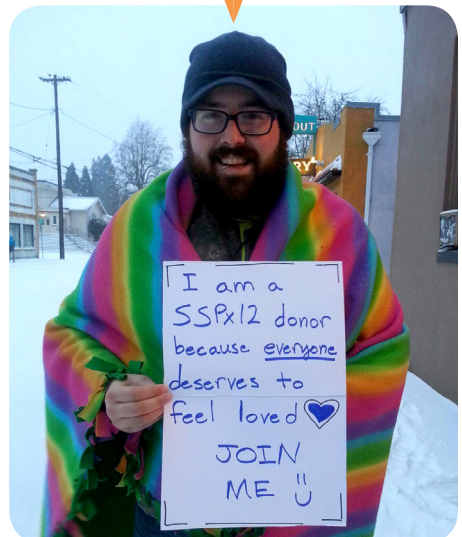
"I am a 12xSSP donor because of the families I've been lucky to serve. They changed my heart."

Heather Spinney, Staff Alumni



"I am a 12xSSP donor because everyone deserves to feel loved."

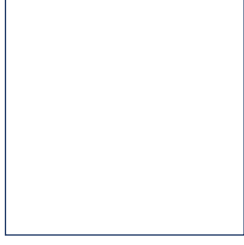
Robbie Frederiksen, Staff





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2014 Newsletter
A publication by Sierra Service Project

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