



Hello parents of middle schoolers!

Thanks for expressing an interest in learning more about our upcoming summer trip. The mission trip is always one of our most anticipated events and we would highly encourage you to send your son or daughter if at all possible. Not only is it a fantastic way to build relationships with other MSM students and leaders, but year after year it has proven to be one of the most impactful weeks in the hearts and lives of all who go. We're excited to see all God has in store for us!

We hope that we can give you a basic idea of what our time away will look like, but know that we will be having a parent meeting about a week or two prior to the trip where we will go over all of the specific details of what our daily schedule will look like, what to pack, any last minute reminders, etc. [Power Connection](#) and [Work Camp](#) are organized and put on by our denomination, the RCA (Reformed Church in America), for all middle school students in our region.

The first portion of our time away will be spent at the [Power Connection Work Camp](#), doing work/service projects in the Minneapolis area. When we arrive, we'll be split into work crews including people from our church and other churches that are joining us. We do not have any say in how groups are split. Even students who have expressed apprehension about being on a work crew different from their best friend, have ended up enjoying the experience. It's a great opportunity to get to know people from all over the region and we are only divided up for the actual 'work day'. Because our youth group is so large, there will typically be at least one leader from our church and at least one other student from Westwood on any work crew your son or daughter might be assigned to. (For everything else we do, we will be together with our Westwood group.)

The bulk of the day on Wednesday and Thursday (typically from 8-4) are spent serving at various established ministries in the area. Students have been able to do a variety of things: packing meals for third world countries, serving at homeless shelters, cleaning schools, working with children in various programs, working at ranches and orchards, helping shut-ins, sorting donations, painting, etc. Each group will get to serve at 2-4 different locations, so your son or daughter will get to experience different types of work and get to learn directly from people who are serving at these ministries every day.

In the evenings, we will have a time for worship and teaching with the whole group followed by some fun events (usually going to a park for a cook out, going to a place kind of like 'The Mark/Sempecks', etc.) and time with just our group to close out the evening. This year the Work Camp will be held at Bethel University in St. Paul, MN. We will be staying the dorms there and eating our meals at the cafeteria. For housing, we will be assigned rooms with just

people from OUR group. (So, even though they will work with crews from lots of different churches, they will be assigned rooms with people from only our church.)

On Friday, we'll wrap up the Work Camp and get ready for the **Power Connection Conference** to begin. (Additional church groups will come only for this portion of the trip, so it will be a larger group for the conference.) This year (for the first time) both the Work Camp and Conference will be held at the same University. This is nice for us because we won't have to worry about packing up and getting re-settled during our time away!

The primary focus of the conference portion of the trip is to grow spiritually. They bring in speakers and bands and we will have 1-2 'main sessions' per day where we worship and learn with the large group. (The Main Sessions are GREAT!) Each day we'll also have some scheduled youth group time and free time options for fun on campus. On Saturday evening, we'll also get to spend from about 5 p.m. until close at Valley Fair theme park, riding the roller coasters, etc. We will be dismissed around lunch time on Sunday before we head back to Omaha.

While we don't know exact times right now, we anticipate that we'll depart around 10 a.m. on Tuesday, July 23rd and return around 8-9 p.m. on Sunday, July 28th. We have rented a charter bus that will bring us to and from our destination and transport us around the cities during the days as well. Typically we have anywhere from 45-65 total participants attend from our church (adults and students).

The cost per student this year is \$360. You are welcome to pay in full, or utilize the payment plan option that is listed in the initial letter. If finances are tight for your family and that would prevent you from sending your student, please talk with us. There is a **scholarship application form** you can fill out to see if you might be eligible for some assistance. We are also holding **an individual fundraiser going on NOW – Feb. 6th**. If you'd like to sell Eileen's Cookie dough, either talk with Kara or print the forms off the website and start selling! Each 3 lb. tub of dough sells for **\$15.00** and for each tub you sell, you'll receive a **\$6.00** credit toward your mission trip.

If you want to sign up for the trip --- you must:

- Fill out the online registration form at **synodyouth.org** and
- Pay your deposit on our church website **westwoodchurch.net**
- ***After you sign up online AND pay your deposit, then you will be considered officially registered**
- Registrations will be first come, first served and there are limited spots available

Registrations will be open January 14th - February 3rd.

Hopefully that information is helpful for you! If you find you still have questions that I didn't address, please feel free to contact me and I'll be happy to chat with you more about it!

Blessings,
~ Kara Willems (& Aaron and the MSM team)
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