

**The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell
Pittsburgh Project Service Camps 2019
Parent Handbook**

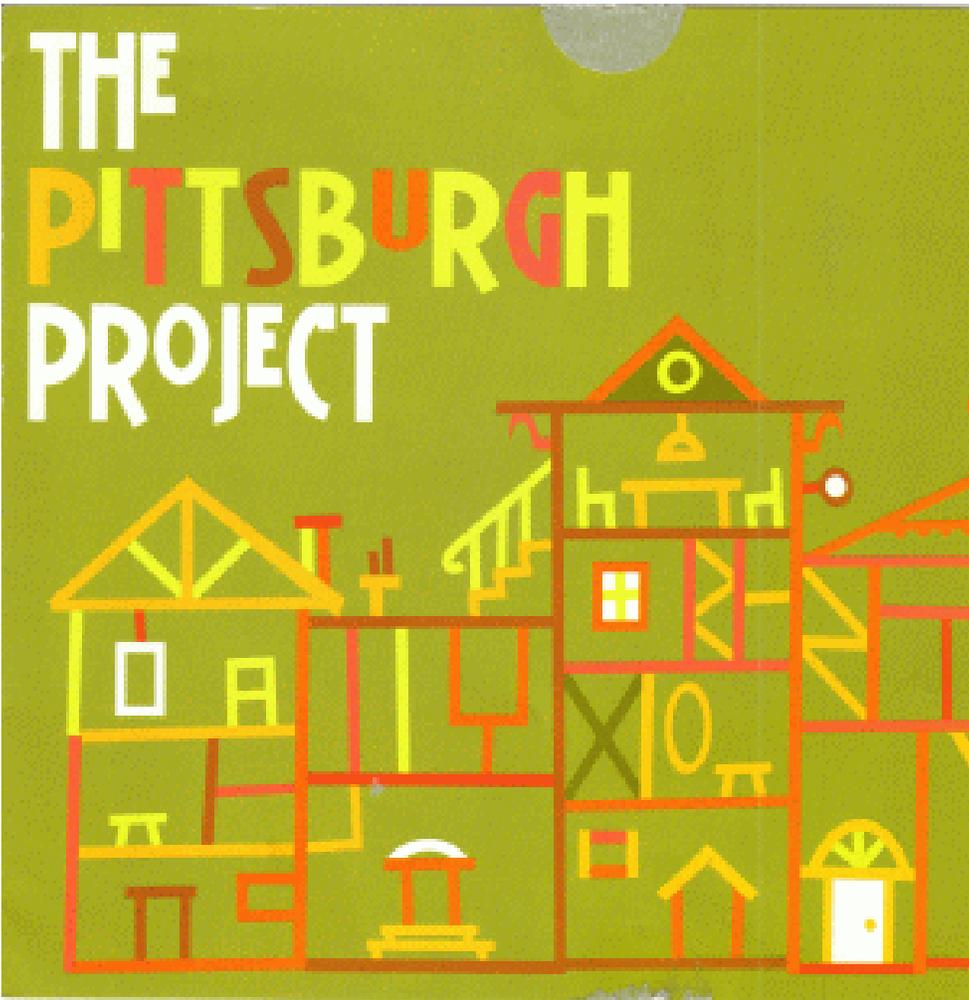


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What is The Pittsburgh Project?

The Pittsburgh Project is a nonprofit community development organization with a 25 year track record for developing leaders and serving the city's most vulnerable residents. Their year round staff of 51 operates a progressive series of afterschool and summer programs for 450 urban young people, deploys over 2800 people annually to perform free home repairs for Pittsburgh's elderly homeowners, and spearheads economic development and job training efforts in their Pittsburgh neighborhood. Their vision is "That Pittsburgh will be called a City of Truth, where once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets each with cane in hand because of age, and where the city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there" (adapted from Zechariah 8:4-5).

Why the Pittsburgh Project?

The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell has been taking teenagers to The Pittsburgh Project for 17 years. Chuck and Joyce McGrath first began taking teens to Pittsburgh as a summer mission trip for Sr. High Students and it has since grown to include our Jr. High group as well. Throughout the years we have built a relationship with the staff and community of The Pittsburgh Project and return year after year to this place that has become dear to so many of our young people.

What Happens at The Pittsburgh Project

Students and adult advisors are broken up into work groups for the week. The first morning we are at TPP we eat breakfast, have morning devotions, and then head out to our work sites about 9am. We spend the day painting, putting up drywall, doing yard work, pouring cement, and a variety of other things that help out the poor and elderly of Pittsburgh. We return to TPP around 4pm for showers and free time. Most teens spend their free time in the game room playing four square, foosball, ping pong, or cards. Other go to the Charles Street Café for a cold coffee drink or smoothie after a long day. At 6pm we eat dinner and then head to Club which is in the sanctuary. We play games, sing, and listen to a speaker. Then we are dismissed to our discussion groups for the week. These groups consist of our work group as well as other teens and leaders. Following discussion we have free time until 10pm and then we head up to bed! Lights out is at 11pm. We follow this same routine fairly closely for the rest of the week!

Safety at The Pittsburgh Project

Your child's safety is of the utmost importance to us. We will be working and living in inner city Pittsburgh for the week. As with any inner city mission, the issues of poverty, drug use, and violence are prevalent. The North Side neighborhood that houses TPP respects the project and appreciates what the project has done for their residents. Unfortunately this does not keep there from being violence in the community. In the past 26 years of The Pittsburgh Project's existence, there have been a handful of shootings near the project campus. No one from the project has ever been involved in any of these shootings, and there have never been any injuries to any Pittsburgh Project participant. If any such incident should occur on our summer service camp trips we will notify parents as soon as possible and will work with the Pittsburgh Project staff and police to ensure the safety of your children.

The Pittsburgh Project Campus

The Pittsburgh Project campus consists of three buildings – the Dormitory, the School, and the Church. TPP Participants are required to stay within this area at all times, unless going to the work site or somewhere else with an adult leader. There is an enclosed courtyard with a volleyball court as well as a game room within the Dormitory for teens to play foursquare, billiards, foosball, ping pong, and air hockey. In the lower level of the church there is the Charles Street Café where teens can purchase coffee drinks and goodies during free time. There is a park and pool across the street that the teens are invited to use during free time, but they must have an adult advisor with them.

Our Technology Policy

This week is a time to get to know other people and share in face to face communication. The best way for our group to get to know each other and others during the week is for teens to leave their cell phones at home. There is very limited cell phone service at The Pittsburgh Project itself and there is no appropriate time to use cell phones while we are offsite.

However, we understand that some parents would like their teen to have their cell phone on them during the week. Our policy is as follows:

1. Phones may NOT be out during vehicle rides once we reach Pittsburgh.
2. Phones may NOT be out at worksites for anything except taking pictures. No personal music on your phone at work sites.
3. If we see a cell phone out (anywhere but in the dorm rooms) we WILL confiscate it and it will not be returned until the car ride home.
4. Teens MUST tell an adult advisor if they will be making a phone call in the evening. Safety is our #1 policy and we need to know where teens are. Evening phone calls often require teens to

walk around the parking lot to find a signal.

5. It is very important to get enough sleep every night. Listening to music to fall asleep is fine, but all other cell phone use is not allowed once the lights are out.

Parent Contact

It is VERY important that we have a correct email address for you, as that is how we will be contacting you throughout the week. When we arrive at our hotel on the first night we will send out an email to let everyone know. Each day of our trip you will receive an email from the trip leaders letting you know how our day is going. Please keep in mind that we will only be able to go on the internet once a day for a very brief time, so please do not plan to hear back from us if you email us during the week. If there is an emergency, please call one of the adult advisors' cell phones.

If you would like your teen to call you throughout the week before bed, they are more than welcome to use the adult advisors' phones.

Trip Costs and Due Dates

Sr. High Trip

- January 27th - \$100 Deposit Due
- March 3rd - \$400 (If you do not pay by this date your spot WILL be dropped)
- June 9th – TBD (this final cost fluctuates yearly based on gas and hotel prices- but based on last year's cost, should be roughly \$100)

Jr. High Trip

- January 27th - \$100 Deposit Due
- March 3rd - \$250 (If you do not pay by this date your spot WILL be dropped)
- June 9th – TBD (this final cost fluctuates yearly based on gas and hotel prices- but based on last year's cost, should be roughly \$100)

Mandatory Meeting Dates

Growing together as a group and preparing spiritually for our week is a very important part our trip. Meetings that are missed MUST be made up.

- Sunday, January 27th – First Meeting for all parents and students in Chapel @ 12:30p.m.
- Sunday, March 3rd – 2nd PAYMENT DUE & Meeting for Advisors and Students in Chapel @12:30p.m.
- Sunday, June 30th – Commissioning Sunday @10:00a.m.
- Sunday, September 29th – Pittsburgh Sunday

Mini Missions

It is important to remember that our service to God does not only happen in Pittsburgh. We are called to serve the poor and elderly right here in New Jersey as well! For that reason we ask that each student participate in one of our “Mini Missions” during the year. Here are some of the projects they may choose from this year:

- Children’s Mid-week program – Wednesday, March 6th – 4:00-7:30 PM
- Camp Johnsonburg Spruce Up Day – Saturday, April 6th – 9am-5pm
- Church clean up – Sunday, April 7th – 12:30-3:30pm
- Children’s Mid-week program – Wednesday, April 17th – 4:00-7:30 PM
- Good Friday Children’s Program – Friday, April 19th – 10am-1pm
- Grover Cleveland Park Cleanup – Saturday, April 27st – 9am-12pm
- Sandwich Night – Tuesday, May 7th – 5:00-8:00 PM

Fundraisers

We understand that summer mission trips can be a big expense. So we hope to offer some relief in the form of opportunities! This year we will be having two car washes to help reduce some of the costs. Students who participate fully in the car wash will receive the money earned.

- Saturday, May 4th – Sr. High Carwash – 10am-2pm
- Saturday, June 8th – Jr. High Carwash – 10am-2pm

In Their Own Words

Don't take it from me, hear from our teens the impact that The Pittsburgh Project has had on their life and faith journey!

The experience the Pittsburgh Project brings to the camper is beyond what any outside viewer may believe. One learns so much in such a short time. Being face to face with poverty, handicaps, and sadness is the most humbling thing a teenager can do. Yet combatting all of that with a smile and a will to serve results in everyone receiving joy. I've always found this camp to be life changing; it made me a better person. I see growth in my character each and every year, just as I see it in everyone else. – Peter Shultz

This week was full of struggles. However, for the first time, my struggles did not overwhelm me with strife and self-deprecation, but rather, helped me see God's light. It seemed as though every scripture, every prayer, every discussion applied to my present pain and suffering. But they were all words of encouragement. Encouragement to keep faith in God, in others, and in myself. As I approach a new chapter in my life, I am relieved that I can take the lessons I've learned and apply them. I am so grateful for this opportunity. – Kelly Stein

A life changing moment, that is how I would explain the Pittsburgh Project. To help out homeowners before thinking about yourself, and of course to feel empathy between your homeowner, group members, etc. Now, I feel almost like a new person and just think about everything in a different way. Pittsburgh was awesome, amazing, and a life changing moment. I can't wait till next year! – Katie Olsen

The Pittsburgh Project was not a trip, but it was instead a life changing experience. It shows you that life is not just that small safe town you live in. It is a whole world just waiting to be made more and more beautiful. – Emma Davison

I didn't think the trip would change me so much. I met an incredible amount of new people, from our own congregation and others. My views of Christianity have been altered and my walk with God became so much more. I feel that everything is so much more clear and I will remember the trip for a lifetime. – Kate Arcell