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# Going Home

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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Going Home

**05.23.2013 | Catholic, Service and Giving, Students**

For nearly half a century — 49 years, to be exact — University of Dayton students have lived among the people of Salyersville, Ky. It's a tiny, rich-in-spirit slice of Appalachia just 227 miles away from campus but worlds apart in way of life.

A group of 14 students will share a dilapidated, \$100-a-month 1930s farmhouse in the hills of Kentucky that they will call home for nine weeks. The University of Dayton Summer Appalachia Program is the University's longest-standing campus ministry service program. The students and adviser Bro. Tom Pieper, S.M., depart campus May 28 with vanloads full of donated food and clothing in tow.

"I've never felt so called to do something like this in my entire life. I just know that Salyersville is exactly where God wants me to be this summer," said Erica Reist, a religious studies and sociology major from Centerville, Ohio. "I've visited a few times before and have really fallen in love with the people and have found a community there that is not present anywhere else. Sometimes you just know in your heart when something is right; I feel like I'm going home this summer."

The students will run a free day camp and teen center and volunteer at a nursing home during a summer where they will live simply and learn more than they ever imagined about themselves. They will give up most of modern life's material trappings — TVs, cell phones and computers — share a bathroom with one sink and sleep on the floor or in bunk beds in a house with no air conditioning.

Christopher White, a criminal justice major from Silver Spring, Md., is looking forward to living a simpler life. "I can use that culture shock," said White, who was inspired to sign up for the trip after a friend died of an apparent suicide.

"It made me realize I'm not achieving my full potential as a person and giving back to others," he said.

Erin O'Connell, a dietetics major from Dayton, Ohio, wants to step out of her comfort zone, experience another culture and grow in her faith.

"I feel like our society centers so much on experiencing other countries that sometimes getting to know the people within the United States is overlooked and taken for granted," she said.

"I would like to get to know the people of Salyersville and Magoffin County and be able to provide fun experiences for the children and teens. I would like to share my strengths and love with others and I felt that the summer program would allow me to do so," she said. "I was inspired by what one of the former participants said, 'Just love and be loved every day.'"

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