

- Girl Scout Troop 1025 cookie donations appreciated by troops
- South Dakota Mission Trip
- Memorial Day Soccer Classic Photos

They're Not Just Cookies, They're Pieces of Home

In the past three years St. Matthew's Girl Scout Troop 1025 (formerly Troop 25) has collected and sent over 600 boxes of Girl Scout cookies, along with notes and pictures to military troops overseas. The grateful cookie recipients have

sent the troop not only notes of thanks, but this year they were presented with two Certificates of Appreciation and an American

flag flown in Afghanistan. These items are on permanent display in the trophy case near the school office. The girls invite you to take a look and while you're there pick up a list of websites that also support our troops. There are many easy ways to let our military troops and their families know how much we appreciate their work for our freedom. Here at St. Matthews we are blessed with many parishioners and visitors who are veterans or related to service people. In fifth grade these girls will continue giving support to our troops through the efforts of their teacher and in some cases a hug to their dad.

— Article and photos by Renee' Tezak-Unti



Mission Trip to South Dakota



“YouthWorks does offer a site here in the Milwaukee area, but we want our youth to experience a different area of the country...and see how other people live. We want them to get away from their parents and family for a week — and meet new people and broaden their horizons. However, we also want a site that’s with-in a day or two drive too...because with only a week for the trip...it would be hard to reach a site out in California and still have enough time to do meaningful work there.” Even though it’s a 15-hour drive away, that’s why a site like the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota is a perfect fit for this year’s mission trip.

When we think of going on summer vacation...images of lazy days out on the lake with family...or maybe even time at an all-inclusive resort where we can spoil ourselves probably come to mind. But, that’s not where a number of youth from St. Matthew Parish and the surrounding community went this year. They and their chaperons spent part of their vacation lending a helping hand on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. In fact, the week of June 16 to 23, they were nearly one-thousand miles away from us on the parish’s annual mission trip... performing a lot of necessary work to improve the lives of others.

Nearly a Year of Planning

Planning for this year’s mission trip began nearly a year ago. One of the first decisions that had to be made was the location. Shelly Madden, Director of Youth Ministry at St. Matthew explains, “Picking a location for the annual mission trip can sometimes be a tough choice. Every year, we go

through a program called YouthWorks, which helps coordinate the work we do at the trip sites. YouthWorks actually offers us 87 different locations for us to choose from.”

How Pine Ridge Was Chosen

One of the main criteria Shelley considers when picking a site is its location from Southeast Wisconsin. She says,

Shelly also mentions, “The other big factor in picking a site every year is deciding on a place that the youth really want to go to. You’re not going to have a successful mission trip if a site is picked that no teens are interested in going to. We went to Pine Ridge in South Dakota back during the summer of 2001 and it was a big success... so we

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Shelly Madden (left) shows photos from previous mission trips.

Mission Trip, continued from previous page.

thought we'd return again here in 2007...and the response from the youth so far has been really really great."

Second Largest Reservation in the United States

If you've never heard of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation... you're probably not alone. Even though it has a rich history, it's also in a very isolated part of the Great Plains, that few people ever get the chance to visit. The reservation is the second largest in the country and is home of the Oglala Lakota Nation. Pine Ridge stands out among reservations because of its symbolic importance to all Native Americans. This stems from the consequences of two incidents, both of which took place at Wounded Knee. In 1890, the U.S. Army massacred over 300 unarmed Indians. Many saw this as a final blow to those who were avoiding reservation life. In 1973, the American Indian Movement protests led to a 73-day standoff between Native Americans, the FBI and Federal Marshals.

According to information from YouthWorks, Pine Ridge remains a place of extreme poverty, and encompasses one of the poorest counties in the United States. There is virtually no industry on the reservation, leading to an unemployment rate of 84%. Most of those who do have jobs work for the government or schools. The high school dropout rate is approximately 50%.

Mission Trip Focused on Two Areas of Ministry

The week-long mission trip to Pine Ridge focused on two primary areas of ministry...children and home improvement. The work with children consisted of a wonderful hands-on afternoon program of games, crafts, skits, songs, and interactive lessons...all led by the youth of St. Matthew who are on the trip. It's designed to help kids learn about Jesus. The youth also had the opportunity to do home improvement... which includes such things as freshening a worn out exterior of a house with a new coat of paint. Participants did two days of house painting, and two days of ministry with children, so that everyone had the opportunity to do both.

Youth from St. Matthew were mixed with the youth from other groups for their week of service. Shelly says, "I think this a great thing because not only are the youth doing something good for others — they're also making new friends. Often times, they youth will keep in touch with their new friends — and if they're close like from Janesville or Chicago — they'll go and visit them again once the trip

is done."

As of late May, at least 10 youth had signed up to go on this year's trip... and even though Shelley and St. Matthew Parish planned the trip, the work was open to any youth in the surrounding area. On the way out to South Dakota, youth got to see some of the sites of South Dakota — including the Corn Palace in Mitchell and Badlands National Park in Interior.

Parishioner Support, Fundraisers Make Trip Possible

Shelly explains, "We appreciate all the support that people of St. Matthew give us every year. Planning something like this is very costly, in the neighborhood of \$5,000 to \$6,000, especially when you factor in the cost of rental vans, gas, food, and everything." Much of the cost for this year's trip was off-set by generous donations from parishioners and the various fundraisers the youth have had over the past few months in and around Oak Creek.

Shelly says, "We understand that everyone can't just give up a week of their summer vacation to go with us as a chaperon...but financial donations and prayer for us do help us a great deal. I like to look at it as parishioners 'buying a share' in the youth and their trip. In the news we often hear of youth misbehaving, so it's really that much more important that we support them in positive activities like this."

Even though the youth just returned last week from this year's mission trip, planning for the 2008 mission trip will soon begin. If you are interested in being a chaperon or making a donation for that trip, contact Shelly Madden at (414) 762-4200, extension 15, or via email at smadden@stmattoc.org.

— *Article and photos by Robert Tabern*



Memorial Day Soccer Classic Photos

Photos by Sue Maurer



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Produced by the St. Matthew
Communication Committee

Rick Barribeau

Robert Tabern

Amy Cicigoi

Carol Tenner

Kenn Cicigoi

Tom Schneider

Submit Photos, Stories or Story Suggestions
to the Communication Committee at

thebuzz@stmattoc.org • 414-764-9617