

2021

# GRATITUDE REPORT

MOUNTAIN T.O.P.



WHY, AFTER 45 YEARS, DO WE STILL FIND IT  
IMPORTANT TO REPAIR—AND POSSIBLY—BUILD,  
HOMES? THIS REPORT WILL SHARE IN DETAIL WHY WE  
THINK IT'S IMPORTANT

# ALLEVIATE

SUBSTANDARD HOUSING: TO PROVIDE DIRECT SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT THAT ADDRESSES SEVERE HOUSING ISSUES IN OUR SERVICE AREA.

TO PROMOTE LIFESTYLES THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY CHOICES.

# HEAL

# DEVELOP

TO ENGAGE IN SOLUTIONS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR HOLISTIC AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GROWTH.

TO FOSTER GROWTH AMONG THE COMMUNITY,  
PARTICIPANTS, DONORS, AND STAFF.

# LEAD

# EDUCATE

TO PROVIDE AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND PERSONAL GROWTH FOR ALL AGES.

EACH YEAR WE REFLECT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR HOME

HOME

## *Unlocking Opportunity*

Perspective means everything. As I write these words, it's a beautiful Easter Sunday afternoon here at the Cumberland Pines campus, and a group of local children are down by the dining hall having a spirited Easter egg hunt. Otherwise, it's a pretty tranquil day, and a good time to reflect a little. Though I grew up nearby on another mountain (Lookout Mountain, Georgia), this is my first Easter on top of this mountain. It has been an incredible blessing to be part of this wonderful 48 year old organization, and to see the incredible impact that Mountain T.O.P. has made over the years in our seven county service area. We have made that sustained impact over the years with an awesome staff, strong community partnerships, and with an incredible network of supporters (former staff and campers, and ministry friends here and across the globe!). I literally cannot go anywhere (or get on social media) without running into someone who has a Mountain T.O.P. connection (and of course, a Mountain T.O.P. story or two).

One of my core goals this year has been to build upon those connections and continue to develop deeper partnerships in our community and region. This includes churches and civic groups, businesses and academic partners and many others. Why is this so important? It certainly helps us to share the story of Mountain T.O.P. in more places and with more people, but it also helps us to leverage an even greater impact with your donations and support.

# EACH YEAR WE REFLECT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR HOME & MOUNTAIN T.O.P.

A lot of those connections were evident during our recent Housing Summit here at Cumberland Pines. We wanted to bring together people and organizations from our area and the surrounding region to spend some time talking and thinking about housing possibilities for our area. Close to 50 persons from a variety of groups and counties showed up and shared ideas, asked questions, and listened to some incredible speakers and presenters. It was a great day, and folks left feeling hopeful at what could possibly happen around housing in our area. We are excited about working with these allies not only in our historic ministry of repairing housing, but in our expanding mission of developing new, affordable housing stock for our area.

Your support has been instrumental in helping us over these many years to make a difference in the communities of the South Cumberland Plateau and Sequatchie Valley. Homes have been repaired and lives have been changed every year. Your continued support will also help us to unlock opportunities for families and seniors who are currently in need of affordable housing. Having a safe place to call home opens up possibilities, and helps families and communities to thrive. Thank you for partnering with us as we dream and work together toward expanding the opportunities for housing in our area. Because of your support, we are able to be ready and open to where God is moving us in mission in these beautiful mountains that we call home.

*Rev. Mike Feely*

HOME REPAIR IS ABOUT MORE THAN BUILDING A PORCH OR CLEARING A YARD. IT'S ABOUT THE ACCESSIBILITY THAT IS GAINED WHEN A FAMILY NOW HAS A SAFE WAY TO ENTER AND EXIT THEIR HOME. IT'S ABOUT HOW THAT ENTRYWAY WILL SERVE AS A MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT ENTRYWAY INTO A HEALTHIER, MORE SUSTAINABLE, AND MORE SOCIALLY CONNECTED LIFESTYLE.

# 2021 HOME REPAIR EXPERIENCE **YSM**



“

*Love the community outreach and helping neighbors learn about MTOP. Everyone embraces MTOP in the surrounding area and that shows the love and appreciation they have for the work you do.”*

2021 - YSM Camper



197

families served through  
Major & Minor Home  
Repair

98

percent of families  
satisfied with MTOP's  
work

96.5

percent of volunteers  
who want to serve in  
the valley below after  
working at MTOP



# STORY OF **YSM**

A few weeks over the summer we had the privilege of getting to know and work with Mrs. A through building a ramp. This ramp has helped Mrs. A “get everything fixed to where [she] can live here and not have to go into a nursing home.” Mrs. A is a native local in Grundy County and has deep ties to her community through church, which she carools to multiple times a week.

Mountain T.O.P. has helped Mrs. A live on her own longer, be prouder of her home, and most importantly has allowed her to build faith-based relationships with the youth that built her ramp.

“The kids are the real blessing, they are just something else” says Mrs. A. While they were building her ramp, each of the youth went in and got to know Mrs. A, her dog patches, and got to share their faiths with her. The work is an amazing thing they got to do but those relationships built are really the irreplaceable part of Mountain T.O.P. Mrs. A wasn’t just pleased with the social interaction, she also says “I’m amazed by the quality of what they built, you just don’t see people nowadays with that kind of work ethic.” Both the youth leaving and Mrs. A were sad to see each other go but Mrs. A says “my only regret is not having them sign their names so I can for them all by name.”

*Jane Lannom | 2021 MC*



# 2021 DAY CAMP EXPERIENCE **YSM**

Building resilience, exploring community, reading, growing in healthy lives, playing, learning about Jesus—this sums up a week of Day Camp. Five days of Day Camp broadens horizons, brightens futures, and builds hope in youth ages 6-11 from Grundy County.



**95** percent of Day Camp kids care about their community

“

*“Mountain T.O.P. Youth leaders are blessing disabled children with Christian friends through being part of the group. Grant told me that he contributes and his ideas are commended by the youth leaders in the group. He feels a sense of belonging to something important.”*

*-2021 Day Camp Mom*

**89** percent of Day Camp kids feel confident in themselves

**120+** unique kiddos served through Mountain T.O.P. front-yard day camp program.

During our first camp week, some of the Day Camp kiddos that we worked with were cousins Grant, Grayson, Brody, and Baylor. They were signed up by Kimberly who sat down and talked with one of our Day Camp staff members about her experiences in the community and with Mountain T.O.P. She talked about the safe community that they live in, and how the friendly people and quiet, slower paced life fit their needs better than a city ever could. Kimberly is very in tune with the community as she has been a teacher for 28 years in the area and has known many of her current student's family members as students.

## 2021 DAY CAMP EXPERIENCE

# YSM

We also asked Kimberly what brings her joy. Her first answer was the boys, Grant, Grayson, and Brody. Kimberly also discussed finding joy in serving others, and when she puts God first in her life she said that she feels joy in those moments. Kimberly also went on to talk more about the impact that the YRG we had at her house was playing an instrumental role in bringing little snippets to joy.

One of our Youth Renewal Groups went out to Kimberly's house everyday that week and led the boys in Bible stories, games, reading, crafts, and more. While working with these kiddos, the Youth Renewal Group was able to meet them where they needed, and also adapted well on the fly to make sure they weren't bored. This was especially important for Grant who has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user. In talking with Kimberly and her mother, they told of how they tried to keep Grant as involved in things as possible and that they would try any activity with him once to see if it were possible for him to continue doing. They did this with a vacation bible school program within the last couple years, but by the time they were able to help Grant travel between stations it was time to switch to the next one. Mountain T.O.P.'s front yard day camp program is the only that has ever come to him, which has allowed him to learn and grow alongside his cousins. In a letter Kimberly wrote to us she said, "Mountain T.O.P. Youth leaders are blessing disabled children with Christian friends through being part of the group. Grant told me that he contributes and his ideas are commended by the youth leaders in the group. He feels a sense of belonging to something important." She also discussed the growth that she has seen in all of the participating kiddos in the areas of vocabulary, communication, and grammar skills which has ultimately led to improvements in their writing skills as well. Without running our front yard Day Camp program this summer, we wouldn't have been able to meet Grant's needs, thus leaving him out of all of the wonderful experiences that this program has to offer. We are so thankful to have been able to work with Grant and look forward to continuing to find ways to make sure kiddos with exceptionalities can still be involved in our Day Camp programming in the future.





“

*Mountain T.O.P. allowed me to grow as a person not only physically but mentally and spiritually."*

*-2021 YSM Camper*

# 2021 CAMPER EXPERIENCE

# YSM

24,744

Volunteer hours completed

64

Unique churches represented



*"The staff at MTOP is so accommodating and accepting of all our needs. This sets the tone for us to be accepting of others. From concern over medical issues to planning alternate activities, every expressed need was met."*

*-2021 YSM Camper*



“

*"I always come home with a renewed sense of spirit and purpose, which has affected a permanent volunteerism for me."*

*-2021 YSM Camper*



# 2021 SUMMER STAFF EXPERIENCE

*"After working at Mountain T.O.P. it feels like I can do anything now. The summer really gave me the confidence in my abilities and taught me how*

**66**

*to interact in a workspace!"*

- 2021 Summer Staffer



**100%**

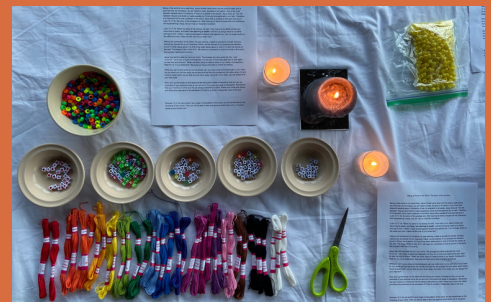
of summer staff said they were comfortable with speaking in front of large groups of people after their summer at MTOP.

**82%**

are comfortable leading others spiritually after their summer at MTOP.

**100%**

of summer staff believe they are resourceful in problem solving after their summer at MTOP



# PROGRAM MANAGER EXPERIENCE

When I applied to come here this summer, I checked 3 boxes. SPMC, SPM, and PM. My hope was to be hired for an SPM. Yes I know I look exactly like what you imagine a SPM being like. I wanted to be out in the field, using my hands and getting dirty. Changing lives.

So when Sophia called and offered me a PM position, I first answered that I would be happy sweeping the floor if it meant I could be on the mountain again but then I was a little disappointed. I had no concept of what a PM even consisted of, let alone if I would enjoy or excel at it. I got here for training and was still unsure of what my role was. In-camp operations? Like passing out songbooks and answering the phones? I could do that. Still yearning for the hands-on ministry work I had been hoping for, I started the summer lost. The opportunities that lie in the program position are not easy to see but are bountiful once you are committed

Worship is a time to sit and soak up the Lord. Be thrown into the word and sing praise for God. This summer it was my job to put those services on for hoards of people. At first it was hard for me to enjoy worship since it was my responsibility to put it together. I spent the whole time so worried about whether I laid out enough carpet squares or whether it was going to rain or not that I forgot to actually listen to what God was trying to tell me.

Wednesdays are days set aside in the scheduling for Program Managers to decide the structure of worship. With my wonderful staff's help, we created a prayer labyrinth into the Bible chapter of Exodus. It explored the story of the Tabernacle as a place of refuge to seek, a travelling sanctuary to build with the Lord. It was exhausting to put together and even more exhausting to take down at 11pm after working for 15 odd hours already. But I never got tired of doing it. Watching people journey through something I spent 7 hours building was life-giving. My week 2 was full of tears, but Wednesday of Week 2 was when I really started to get it.

Pouring the love of God into my campers got to be my job. Luke 6:38 says "..."

What I poured into the campers was what I got out of it. Watching a 14 year old girl love a part of station worship so much that she asked to take it home was my job. That is why I was here. Program is a hard part of the ministry to nail down but it is the match that lights the fire of service to the Lord in the people that come through those gates. Changing their lives just like Mountain TOP has changed mine. And I wouldn't have traded being a part of it for anything in the world. P4L!

*Analiye Evans | 2021 PM*

# 2021 HOME REPAIR EXPERIENCE **AIM**

82.5

percent of volunteers had a renewed sense of home after spending the weekend at MTOP

“

*Hearing the idea of home and how much home relates to history and your life story as well as family before you impacted me." - 2021 AIM camper*

98

percent of volunteers said that the home repair projects were meaningful



13

families served through Major

2,320

Volunteer hours completed

17

projects that repaired the vital structure of a home

**The floor and flooring system was replaced by MTOP volunteers in the photos below.**



**before:**



**after:**

We worked with Ms. L for two weekends this spring. Our volunteers worked to repair sub-flooring and install new vinyl flooring in many rooms of her home. Ms. L was so fun to chat with and get to know throughout the whole project. Ms. L has many grandchildren with whom she loves to spend time. They attend and enjoy Mountain T.O.P.'s Day Camp program. Weekend 1 our volunteers found some soft spots in the flooring of Ms. L's home. They were quick to repair these spots so the structure would be safe for Ms. L and her grandchildren. After repairing and rebuilding parts of the sub-flooring the volunteers installed new vinyl flooring in Ms. L's bedroom. Weekend 4 we had another group of volunteers working with Ms. L on installing new vinyl flooring in two more rooms of her home. The group also tackled installing new underpinnings around her home. After four days of working with Mountain T.O.P. volunteers, Ms. L's home is safer and healthier.



