

11 youth and 2 adults spent a week at LifeWise STL



The Two Rivers Youth took part in an Immersive Service Learning trip to LifeWise STL in Saint Louis from July 14-19. The trip included service at the community center, learning about urban justice issues and navigating systems, and fun excursions.

They left on Monday at noon and arrived in Saint Louis in time to have pizza for dinner and go grocery shopping for supplies for the week. The team stayed across the street from LifeWise in the "Rutger House" which housed all 6 girls in one room, the 5 boys in another room, and the two adults in separate rooms upstairs. They shared two bathrooms (with one shower) a small kitchen and a meeting room. It was small, but big enough for hide and seek almost every night.

The Saint Louis summer was in full effect all week and staying cool wasn't always easy, especially when the crew was helping sort merchandise for the LifeWise Holiday bazaar in public storage facilities, washing their four 15-passenger vans, or cleaning out the garage. Most of the service projects were done in the morning. The group would head back to the house to cleanup and have lunch. Then Dan, the Lifewise director of civic engagement, would lead the group in a learning activity. One day the kids had to do a computer simulation to navigate difficult choices families living under the poverty line have to make. Another day, they learned about SNAP benefits and

had to budget for a week of meal prep. They then went to Aldi to do some shopping with their meal plan.

Another activity was playing Monopoly - with a more realistic, and less level, playing field. The group learned some real-life lessons about generational wealth and systemic oppression.

The fun activities included a trip to the Saint Louis Art Museum, the City Museum, the Saint Louis Zoo, a ride to the top of the Gateway Arch, and dinner at Fitz's root beer bottling company and restaurant.

Most agreed however, that the highlight of the trip was spending time at the Freedom School, where our youth spent the "Harambe" time with the kids from the school. The 30-minute session to start each day included uplifting chants, a read-aloud, and an inspirational song called "Something Inside So Strong." The kids loved the positivity and energy that the kids from Freedom School brought each day. They also spent a morning playing in the water table with the toddlers and the playground with the age 3-4 preschoolers.

The group also shared reflections each night and morning devotions. They read from Luke 10, when Jesus sent out 72 to go into the world and share the gospel. They made connections between the work they did at Lifewise and Jesus' first disciples going into the world to heal and share the good news of love and generosity.