



Lutheran Church Extension Fund

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Create in me a clean heart,
O God, and put a new and right spirit within me."
Psalm 51:10

Students NAIL down summer job, ministry opportunities

By Kim Plummer Krull

Jose Zarate decided to devote his summer break to working on a construction project for an LCMS congregation after an inspiring chapel presentation at Concordia University Chicago.



"The message was about how we should make our lives an active witness, and I thought that was something I needed to improve upon," Zarate said of the presentation by Laborers For Christ. "I decided I could help out by helping churches build up the kingdom of God."

Zarate is one of 10 college students or recent graduates who participated in the summer debut of NAILS, the young adult program of Laborers For Christ. The young people worked alongside Laborers on construction projects for LCMS congregations from Virginia to Idaho. They tackled church and school additions, including helping to remodel former horse stables into future classrooms in Omaha, Neb., and turn an old plastics factory into a multi-purpose center in Kansas City, Mo.

"It was a great start [for the NAILS program]," said Dan Baker, vice-president/director with Laborers For Christ (LFC), a ministry of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund that helps LCMS churches and schools build within their budgets. "This year, we were just getting our feet wet, but we're already making plans to expand."

Since LFC began in 1980, Laborers generally have been retired men and women. LFC started NAILS to connect with young adults by offering both a summer employment and ministry opportunity.

This first year, NAILS targeted Concordia university, college, and seminary students. Next summer, Baker says, NAILS will expand to also include students involved in LCMS campus ministries at other colleges and universities.

We had a lot of calls from [LCMS college] chaplains saying their students wanted to be a part [of NAILS]," Baker said. "We learned this is a real outreach ministry."

Rachel Mol, a recent Concordia University Seward graduate, participated in NAILS for a summer job before she starts her first teaching assignment in August. As she helped build a fellowship addition for Zion Lutheran Church, Hampton, Neb., Mol learned to use a variety of power tools and enjoyed working with a variety of people from "all walks of life, but who are all one in the Spirit."

"I was a little nervous at first when I walked onsite and realized I was the only college student," said Mol. "But the people have been just fantastic. Everyone watches out for me. It's like having a bunch of aunts and uncles and grandparents hanging around."

NAILS participants work for LCMS congregations and earn minimum wage (the same as Laborers' compensation). While Laborers typically live in RVs parked near the construction site, NAILS workers are hosted by congregation families.

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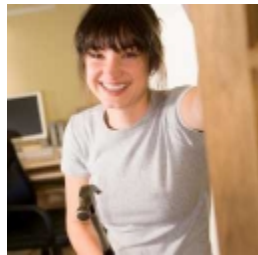
Like Laborers, those who serve with NAILS do more than construction as they join congregation members in worship and other church activities.

Along with helping build a new sanctuary for Shepherd by the Lakes Lutheran Church, Dorothy Naumann cheered the Syracuse, Ind., congregation's softball team. On her 19th birthday, Laborers surprised the Concordia University Chicago student with a party and a special gift -- her own hammer, tied with a bow.

"You learn so much about not just construction, but about life in general from the experiences of the other workers as well as creating your own experiences," said Naumann, a student in the university's deaconess program. "It is just great to be able to work alongside people with the common goal of serving Christ to the best of your ability and doing His will."



Jim Eberhart, who has been with LFC since 2002, calls NAILS participants Zarate and Mark Porth "a real blessing." The students are spending their summer in Kansas City, helping remodel a former plastics factory into the new ministry center for Jesus El Buen Pastor Lutheran Church.



An architecture student at Auburn University, Porth worked last summer with Habitat For Humanity. This summer, he wanted an opportunity to use his design and construction skills and also serve God. The NAILS program, he said, "was the best way possible that I could do both."

Don Nordmeyer, NAILS coordinator for LFC, expects the program to draw more students next summer with the expansion beyond Concordia campuses. He plans to again visit campuses to spread the word about NAILS, which he calls "a vital ministry of the church."

"I'm more positive than ever that this mentoring/participation experience is very important for the future values and life of our church," Nordmeyer said.

To learn more about NAILS, visit www.lcef.org/nails or call 800-843-5233, ext. 6446.

