

## Love in Motion, Again

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# LOVE IN MOTION, AGAIN

Putting Love into Action (PLIA), short-term mission trips during Dordt's spring break, has been an integral part of the Dordt experience for more than 40 years.

For two years, though, PLIA was put on pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This spring, groups of six to 10 students embarked on trips to 12 different sites around the United States—once again putting into motion a longstanding Dordt tradition.

Trips are funded by donations, fundraising, and a \$105 participant fee, says Annika Rynders, a PLIA co-chair. This year, student groups went to places like Austin, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; Denver, Colorado; Houston, Texas; Inez, Kentucky; and more. They worked with community churches, local ministries, immigrant communities, redevelopment organizations, and other Christian organizations.

One hope for PLIA is that students grow in compassion toward those they meet while on PLIA, says Sam Ashmore ('14), campus pastor. "Each year, students come back raving about what they learned and how they grew in their understanding of God's world; it's beautiful."

In St. Louis, Missouri, Nicole Mahoney co-led a team trip to serve at Oasis International, a ministry that provides support, resources, and communities for refugee families resettling in the St. Louis area. Mahoney says their team helped with organizing donated furniture, providing childcare to refugees taking English classes, bringing food to homeless camps, and more.

One memorable experience involved delivering mattresses and bed frames to an Afghani refugee family. "Afterward, the family invited us downstairs for tea. I was struck by the hospitality and generosity they showed even though we were largely unable to communicate,"



LUCY ZYLSTRA ('23)

**This year, 104 students participated in PLIA, short-term mission trips in the United States.**

says Mahoney.

Lucy Zylstra co-led a group to Colorado City, Colorado. They worked with children at an afterschool program, volunteered at a local thrift store, helped feed nearly 600 people at a food pantry, and more.

"One evening, we attended a Bible study for college-aged kids. Many people we met had roots in Mormon fundamentalism and were exploring what the Gospel might mean for their lives," says Zylstra. "We ended up going on a local hike with a few of them one afternoon to continue conversations and deepen our connections with them."

Mendenhall, Mississippi was where Graham Ross and his team headed. They worked with Dr. Scottye Holloway of Mendenhall Ministries, helped re-shingle a farmhouse that will provide affordable housing for community members, worked with K-6 grade students, and more.

"We also interacted with the community, and that was focused on racial relations," explains Ross. "We had a couple speakers

talk to the group about Mississippi's history of racial tensions. It was eye-opening for me, and I think the group appreciated learning about those perspectives."

PLIA co-chair Elena Coolbroth's group headed to Georgia where they spent time with the Atlanta Youth Project and God's Farm, a faith-based camp located on a 58-acre farm in West Georgia.

"PLIA is a good opportunity for students to get outside their comfort zone by spending a week with new people in a new place," Coolbroth says. "It's a great opportunity to be reminded of God's love and take the next step to put love into action."

Part of the desire for these trips is that students have fun, says Ashmore, but it's more than that. "My prayer for when they return is that their eyes, ears, and hearts are more open to what God is doing in different places around our country. I hope they learn that there truly is unity in diversity in the kingdom of God."

SARAH MOSS ('10)