

City House

Redemptive Living in Beaver Falls



Introducing Our New Students

Ten students live in the City House this year along with our house mentor. They come from as far as Colorado and as near as Sharon and Harrisville, PA. Each brings their unique personality, gifts and interests to create a diverse community – one that we could not have chosen on our own.

These students have committed to the mission and gift of Christian community for the academic year. As a household, they share the tasks of grocery shopping, cleaning and helping one another get back and forth to campus. They also take turns cooking dinner throughout the week – one set of two partners cooks each day, Monday thru Friday. In addition to living communally as a household, the group seeks to participate in the neighborhood and local

community by hosting the annual block party, maintaining the neighborhood garden and serving alongside various ministries and organizations such as the weekly soup kitchen at the First Presbyterian Church, the Center for Creative Arts Expression, and the Carnegie Library.

While the students stay very busy, most seem to acknowledge the relationships that form among house members as the most significant part of their experience. Every year, eating dinner together becomes the place of this connection, encouragement, laughter, and overall sense of belonging. As we live together throughout the year, “community” becomes less about what we do and more about receiving this gift of people willing to share life with one another.

“At the hearing, I realized the importance of City House and our role in the community. While I listened to neighbors talk about past students, I realized that living here makes an impact, and that it’s positively effecting the neighbors by simple, but important things like playing with kids and growing a garden. Even though these seem small, they matter to our neighbors”.

Sam Bratschie
(Sophomore, Student
Ministry Major)

Zoning Variance: Approved Thanks for your support

Brad and I (Wendy) would like to express our deep gratitude to our neighbors and friends that supported us during our recent zoning hearing. Many of you know that we found out in August that the City House has been in violation of a zoning ordinance. Though we’ve always had 8-10 students in the house, Beaver Falls only allows up to five unrelated people to occupy a single rental property (we were not aware of this). After being overlooked for seven years, we were told that our project required a zoning variance. The process included

an application, \$600 fee, attorney costs, and a public hearing.

After getting the word out, we could not have been more pleased and humbled by our neighbors’ and friends’ attendance and statements during the hearing. Almost 50 people attended the hearing in our favor and one after another spoke on our behalf. It was overwhelming and an incredible affirmation of our work and vision. Thank you. We received word of our variance approval on October 16th!

Valley Youth Networks Builds Garden Pergola

For the past seven years, we’ve been working to develop a vacant lot into an urban garden near the City House. The project began when our students in 2006-07 proposed the idea and partnered with a local youth group. Together they built the first raised beds and invited neighbors into their work. Each year, we’ve added beds and learned more and more about gardening, compost, staking tomatoes, and especially groundhogs. In recent summers, we’ve had up to 11 neighboring households contribute to the garden, in one way or another, and share in the harvest. We

hope it’s been a great community project and shared experience for everyone involved. This summer, we were asked to provide a service project for the Valley Youth Network from Ligonier, PA. When I suggested building a pergola for they garden, they were all over it. Twelve high-school students, along with their adult leaders, spent two days building and left us with a beautiful structure to use as a gathering space, shady reading spot, or just a place to rest. They did a great job and we’re very thankful for their work. What a gift!





City House @ Oak Spring Farm

Civic Engagement: Beaver Falls

Students living in the City House meet together on Thursday evenings to participate in our course entitled Civic-Engagement: Beaver Falls. We have had a fabulous line-up of guest speakers so far. First, Dave Guthrie spoke on the topic of Living-learning communities and college student success, Don Opitz helped us think about table fellowship and the delight of food and cooking, Brad and Sue Frey talked about health and community food choices, Hank Suhr instructed the group on issues of food justice in regards to care for the environment and other creatures, and Eric Miller discussed the benefits of local economies and how can might imagine “living in harmony with the triune God” in regards to our relationships, work, and consumption. Doug Bradbury has also come to facilitate an ongoing conversation about how we can live well with others in Christian community.

These topical experts have provided much direction and rich discussion as we attempt to live into our faith together.

The City House students also took a field trip to Oak Spring Farm in October to meet the local farmers that grow/raise much of our food. The Harley Family, who hosted our group, has farmed the land for nearly 100 years. Each week, the Harley’s sell their produce at five local farm markets.

Later in the semester, the students will spend a night at Lamppost Farms, a local farm that “engages purposeful and productive work, contagious relationships and the celebration of ordinary good food” (www.lamppostfarm.com). As you can see, much of our first semester is

(Continued at bottom of Page 4)

Risa Tillman Serves as House Mentor

We're in the midst of all kinds of new changes for 2013-14! The biggest change this year is that Wendy bought a house and moved out. She now lives about 3 ft. South of the City House (just next door). While Wendy will continue to facilitate the City House program, Risa Tillman has been hired to live in the house and provide leadership. Risa graduated from Geneva College last Spring, where she completed an independent major in Public Health, played soccer and served as a resident assistant in a women's residence hall. She's from Colorado Springs but excited to participate in the experience of Christian



community and to engage our neighborhood and city.

In her own words, "It is such an incredible opportunity to be a part of City House. Already for myself, and I think for all of us, it has been a challenging place of growth and pursuit of God's truth as we learn from the people in our house and the place around us. This will sound cliché but I really mean it: this year is going to be life-changing."

We're very excited to have her on board and know that she'll be a great addition to our project.

Civic Engagement: Beaver Falls

(Continued from Page 3)

focused on the ways we eat and consume. Surely, as we attempt to live into our faith as a Christian community, these everyday practices, habits and decisions matter. Our household is learning together how our very ordinary act of eating is an economic, political, spiritual, social, and justice issue.

Finally, in November, we will be attending the Living in Color Conference at Geneva College, which is a two-day effort to equip

students and others towards faithful leadership in a culturally and racially diverse context. Bob Frazier will be spending some time with us before the conference to describe the racial tensions experienced by our local community and how this continues to shape us even today.

Throughout the semester, our texts will include *The Story of God, story of us* by Sean Gladding, *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and *New Monasticism* by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove.