



By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

One thing Imperial participants at a weekend service project in Denver learned is how grateful the homeless people were for their efforts in distributing food to them.

A group of 17 youths and adults spent Friday and Saturday in Denver on a mission effort sponsored by St. Patrick's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO).

They worked with Christ in the City, a Catholic agency which has a task force working directly with the homeless.

Jeremy Vlasin, who is the adult sponsor for the CYO group and its activities, said the grateful attitude from the homeless was felt by the entire group.

"They all felt how genuinely grateful the homeless people they visited with were for the youths to take the time to do this," Vlasin said.

Youths and adults alike were also surprised when they learned there are 13,000 to 16,000 homeless in Denver.

The group left Imperial Friday, and met that afternoon at the mission's headquarters, where some initial training was conducted.

There, they learned a little about the homeless they would be visiting with in a park near the state capitol, and why they were in that situation.

On Saturday morning, they did a walk-through of the area in which they'd be ministering, and learned "some of the do's and don't's of interacting with the homeless," Vlasin said.

When they returned to the mission headquarters, they picked up sandwiches and other lunch items and headed back to the park.

In small groups, they went out and invited the homeless to come eat with them, and spent about an hour in conversation while they ate together.

Vlasin said afterwards, most of the youths wished they had more time to visit.

Some in the CYO group were in high school show choir, and were convinced to sing a few songs in the park, as well.

Many of the homeless expressed thanks to the group for talking and listening to them, Vlasin said.

While at the headquarters, the Imperial group spent some time in prayer at their chapel, where Mother Teresa had once visited.

One of the Imperial group's connection to Christ in the City is Carolina Ramos, a 2011 Chase County graduate who is a missionary with the agency.

In addition to their work with the homeless, Christ in the City is teaching young, Catholic adults what it means to be a missionary in the U.S., while focusing on the spiritual, intellectual and charitable formation of the participants.

That formation can include serving in a crisis pregnancy center with new or expectant mothers,

working in a homeless shelter with the poor and hungry or assisting Denver's Little Sisters of the Poor in caring for the elderly.

Part of the weekend trip also included the Friday night Rockies/Padres baseball game, at which Sam Cahow caught a homerun ball.