

Sanctuary in Progress

FCCLA Helps Elijah Rising Renovate Old College

Travis Cook
Reporter

Though it may not seem like it, slavery still exists in the United States. Sex trafficking is a form of slavery that is happening throughout the country, with the biggest concentration in Houston, TX. But all of that plans to change.

On November 16, Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) volunteered at the old Bayridge Christian College in Kendleton. The college was bought by Elijah Rising, a Christian-based nonprofit organization, to house victims of sex trafficking.

"If Houston is number one in the nation for sex trafficking, why shouldn't we be number one for the solution?" Elijah Rising found-

er **Cat French** said. "We should have the largest capacity aftercare dedicated to restoration from sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. The land itself is destined to bring restoration to those formally enslaved."

Word about the project spread, which then caught the attention of FCCLA sponsor **Audra Grigar**.

"A friend on Facebook volunteered on the weekend at the old college," Mrs. Grigar said. "I suggested the idea to the students and they loved it."

After deciding to participate, FCCLA went to Kendleton to renovate the future shelter. For three hours, the students worked on many jobs at Kendleton.

"We tore out sheet rock in an old house, and then went inside the old library and



(Photos by Schulte)

Student Smash

Holding a sledgehammer, **Cheyenne Matcheski**¹⁰ smashes a hole into the ceiling of a part of the inside of the house. Before doing some jobs for Elijah Rising, some little precautions had to be taken before they started on the task at hand. "We had to wear these masks on our faces while we were taking down sheet rock," Matcheski said. "We had to protect ourselves from the dust and debris that flew in the air."

threw out old books," senior **Ben Sharp** said. "We just ran around and did whatever we had to do."

When they first got there, the college was a little intimidating with its worn-down look.

"The atmosphere of the place felt spooky," sophomore **Cheyenne Matcheski** said. "It was cool to see all of the stuff that the people left behind. Other than that, the place looked like it had been haunted for years."

Even with its scary appearance, the students started to work at the facility, but more challenges came with each job.

"The hardest job that we did was probably tearing out the sheet rock," Sharp said.

"It would get really dusty after we tore them out and everyone would get dirty from the dust."

Even though there were hard jobs at hand, they still had fun helping at Kendleton Farms.

"The thing I enjoyed the most was when we pushed each other around on the dolly to the dumpster," Matcheski said. "It was really fun pushing everyone around."

Even with FCCLA going to Kendleton Farms, the project isn't completed. It's still possible to volunteer and help Elijah Rising complete it.

"If you have the chance, go out and volunteer," Matcheski said.



Most Valuable Helpers

While at Kendleton Farms, the group came together to take a group picture. 22 students in total came to help at the old college. "It just made you feel good helping out at the place," **Ben Sharp**¹² said. "We helped Elijah Rising out by getting everything they needed to have renovated at their facility. I just wanted to help out the community."