

Mission Trip From Front

The schools operated on a unique schedule, with students choosing between morning sessions (7 AM to 1 PM) or afternoon sessions (1 PM to 5 PM). “You either choose a morning session or an afternoon session,” Watkins explained. “You don’t stay all day.”

Youth leader Sean Smith noted the receptiveness of the students. “I think everybody there was interested in us being there. They were happy that we were there. They were interested in the kids. They wanted to interact. It was like they were all engaged, whereas I think if those kids had come to our school, we probably wouldn’t have been as engaged.”

The group’s ministry efforts yielded significant results. According to their social media updates, “26 wonderful students overall accepted Christ into their lives” during their school visits. The team performed skits, shared testimonies, and distributed bracelets and small Jesus figurines.

Student Spencer Jones reflected on one particularly meaningful experience: “I think the daycare and the last school were the two favorite things that we did. At the last school we got 26 people that accepted Jesus.”

At the daycare located in First Baptist Church of Chinamaca, the group conducted Bible story activities with different age groups. “We went there and then we played with them. And then we did arts and crafts. Each group went to a different age group. And we each did a different craft based for that age,” explained Wyatt Rutherford.

Volleyball From Front

ter of natural competitors who value one another, and a plan to use the early non-district slate to refine what the Lady Lions need to win district matches. The staff left the Bluegrass State Games encouraged by the team’s serve-receive and overall defensive organization, areas Garrard expects to lean on this fall.

The context for 2025 is last season’s 12–19 campaign that finished with a runner-up trophy in the 45th District Tournament and a Region 12 berth. Across 109 sets, Garrard posted 806 kills, 730 assists, 1,839 digs

Softball Coach From Front

coaching experience, working with athletes from Little League through college and running a well-known pitching business in Lancaster that has drawn players from across the state. Her brother, Zach Parsons, is currently the pitching coach at the University of South Carolina, where he helped guide the Gamecocks through a successful season in the competitive Southeastern Conference.

Davis herself is a product of the Garrard County athletic system, competing in multiple sports throughout her youth. She played softball, basketball, and later soccer in high school, earning accolades in each. She was named the Advocate Messenger Female Athlete of the Year in 2004–2005 and received the United States Marine Corps Distinguished Athlete Award. Her softball achievements include multiple All-District and All-Tournament selections across four years of high school competition, starting as early as eighth grade on the varsity

His group created crafts related to the story of David and Goliath, making foam sacks with small rocks.

The trip provided numerous cultural insights that left lasting impressions on the students. The transportation differences were immediately apparent - instead of student parking lots filled with cars, students either walked, rode motorcycles, or were dropped off at school.

The climate presented its own challenges. “It was the heat,” said student Aubree Penix when asked about the biggest surprise. “The heat and how people were just so adapted to it.”

Student Sam Prather added, “It hits 80 here, and you see everybody hot. Yeah, but I mean, down there it’d be 80 degrees, and they’re wearing sweatshirts.”

Perhaps most striking was the attitude and demeanor of the local people. Student Kaden Ellis observed, “What surprised me the most is how much everybody’s smiling. Like, even though they didn’t have what they wanted or have, everything they needed, they were still smiling. And they were more happy than people here.”

The economic differences were stark yet enlightening. The group learned that a good annual income in the area was around \$4,000, with some workers making only \$10 per day. However, the cost of buying houses and groceries remained comparable to prices in the United States.

“So, gas is higher. Gas is higher. Yep. Wow. There are means to, you know, a lot of people fix stuff themselves. They buy from the market. They don’t go to the grocery store, you know, and that stuff is and 297 service aces. Several seniors were central to that production. Setter Hannah Fuller ran the offense with 676 assists and added 51 aces and 176 digs. Outside hitter MaKenna Allen produced 144 kills, 403 digs and 47 aces. Middle blocker McKenzie Martin anchored the net with a team-best 61 blocks, and right-side attacker Jeslyn Baier supplied 31 kills and 17 aces. Those four graduates leave the Lady Lions with the dual task of replacing most of their setting and a significant share of their blocking.

There is, however, a strong returning nucleus. Senior outside hitter Madilyn Combs was last year’s top terminator with

team. Her coaching career has already seen success. While coaching in the 44th District, Davis guided her teams to two district championships and two state tournament appearances. These accomplishments, paired with her lifelong experience in the sport, form the foundation of her approach to leading the Lady Lions.

A central theme of Davis’ vision is the importance of preparation beyond the regular season. She stresses that athletes cannot expect to perform at their best without maintaining conditioning and skill work throughout the year. “You can’t just show up in February and expect to be ready to go,” Davis explained. “We want to build strength, especially in the core and legs, and keep arms in shape to prevent injuries and maintain performance.”

To that end, Davis is collaborating with Garrard County’s athletic and health departments to implement a structured strength and conditioning program. She emphasizes that this is not about heavy weightlifting, but about developing functional

cheap,” explained Sean Smith.

The abundance of small roadside businesses impressed the students. “We were driving on the road, and I think in, like, the span of, like, 30 minutes, there were several tire shops and not even far apart either and like everywhere you look there’s always something to do with cars,” noted Wyatt Rutherford.

Youth leader Curt Carrier was moved by the gratitude shown for small gestures,

“You could buy something like, say, 75 cents, and you can hand them a dollar bill, and they get ready to give you change back. You say, no, just keep it. I mean, man, their face light up like he were giving them a \$20 tip or something.”

The group participated in multiple church services, experiencing worship that differed significantly from their home church. The services featured extensive singing - sometimes 45 minutes to an hour - and lasted approximately two hours.

“And some of the songs that they sang were some of the songs that we sing here,” Watkins noted, highlighting the universal nature of their faith despite language differences.

Student Kaden Ellis found profound meaning in the worship despite the language barrier: “Even though you couldn’t understand them, you could still feel like... that we were all, yeah, we were all part of the same cause, I guess.”

Spencer Jones had an particularly moving experience: “I was in the church and I didn’t know, Spanish and they were worshipping and singing their song and I just started crying. It waseautiful to me just hearing them worship the same God that we do.”

Someone in the group made

206 kills and also led the team with 386 digs and 62 aces. Senior libero Kayley Board stabilized the back row with 347 digs and 52 aces. Senior Jerrica Mullins contributed 98 kills, 274 digs and 38 aces and is set to take on more six-rotation work on the outside. Junior middle Elizabeth Lockard, who logged 24 blocks a year ago, gives Garrard size in the middle with room for an expanded role. Senior Rylea Hogue (right side), senior Kylie Lucas (right side), senior Katherine Floyd (pin), and junior defensive specialist Sophie Lawrence round out a veteran supporting cast. Junior Kendall Quinn, who recorded 104 assists in limited varsity ac-

athleticism—leg drive, core stability, and muscle endurance—that directly benefits softball performance. Her goal is to make these sessions a regular part of the program, not only to improve results but also to instill healthy training habits in her players.

Davis is equally passionate about encouraging multi-sport participation, believing that athletes benefit from the diverse skills and conditioning that different sports provide. However, she stresses that playing multiple sports requires consistent effort. “I played three sports in high school,” she said. “But even when I was in basketball season, I was still pitching in the backyard with my dad a couple times a week. That’s the level of commitment it takes to be ready for spring.”

Another focus for Davis is creating a clear developmental path for softball players in Garrard County. She hopes to work closely with Little League and middle school coaches to ensure that players learn consistent fundamentals at every stage, making the jump to high school smoother and less intimi-

a particularly poignant observation that resonated with Watkins: “Somebody in the group said that language, that they’re not being able to understand, like the language wasn’t a barrier to love. I think one of you kids said that.”

The warmth and community spirit of the Salvadoran people left deep impressions on the visitors. Student Sadie Shumaker observed, “Their community was very put together. Everybody knew everybody, and it was just, it was nice.”

The differences in social interaction were notable. “I mean, we go outside, and we’ll see people, like, in public, and you say ‘hey, good morning.’ Or, like, ‘how you doing?’ And they look at you, and they’re like, why are you talking to me? But I mean down there we were walking around and there would be just random people just walking out like ‘hey good morning, have a good day,’” Wyatt Rutherford explained.

Student Aubree Penix noted the absence of social hierarchies: “They treated, like, everybody the same. So it’s not like here, if you have, I mean, more money and more athletics or whatever, people don’t notice anymore. It’s like everybody was the same.”

The group stayed at Bruce and Tammy Jeffries’ family house, where they experienced the local lifestyle firsthand.

The Jeffries first visited El Salvador in 2002 and before long were operating a mission and orphanage in the area.

The sleeping arrangements presented challenges for the students, particularly with the heat and humidity. The air conditioning could only be used at night, and the boys’ bathroom was

tion last fall, is among the setters stepping into primary duty after apprenticing behind Fuller. Torres also noted newcomer Emily Clark as a front-row addition in the middle.

Measured against last year’s totals, Garrard returns roughly 44% of its kills, 60% of its digs and 63% of its aces. The bigger rebuilds sit at setter and at the net: about 18% of the assists and 31% of the blocks return. That profile matches the staff’s emphasis heading into August—clean first contact, organized floor defense, and developing new rhythm between the setters and a reworked front line. If the serve-receive that impressed at the Bluegrass State Games

dating. She supports allowing select younger players to gain experience at the varsity level when appropriate, pointing out that early exposure can accelerate growth and readiness for higher competition.

The coach has already hosted a meet-and-greet with prospective players, drawing a mix of returning athletes, incoming freshmen, and even several students who are rejoining the sport after time away. Davis was encouraged by the turnout and the enthusiasm she saw. “It feels like positive vibes from everybody,” she said. “Change can be hard, especially for teenage girls, but I hope that being a female coach who sees them in school every day will make them feel comfortable and supported.”

Davis’ connection to Garrard County extends beyond athletics. She has worked in the local courthouse for over a decade, building relationships within the community. While the decision to leave a stable position was not easy, she views this coaching opportunity as a way to give back to the place that shaped her. “Any time you can pour back into the community you

open at the top, creating additional humidity when multiple people showered.

Food experiences ranged from challenging to delightful. One particularly memorable meal featured bone-in chicken sandwiches and strawberry milk in bags, which provided cultural shock for the students. However, they also enjoyed local cuisine and were thrilled when they got to visit Pizza Hut one evening.

When asked about the trip’s impact, the overwhelming response was that it was “life-changing.” Student Wyatt Rutherford reflected, “It was definitely a big perspective change on how, I would say not just I live, but how I see everybody else living. Because, I mean, for me, it just really made me, like, truly grateful to have what I have.”

Spencer Jones found spiritual significance in the experience: “The thing that changed me is just fully realizing obviously there’s Christians all over the world, but this is the first time that I truly saw like we worship the same God, like we have the same God.”

Sadie Shumaker emphasized the lasting impact: “I’m very more, I think, appreciative of what I have here.”

Pastor Tim Leadingham, who accompanied the group as an observer, shared his thoughts: “I was blessed to be a part of the Youth Mission Trip to El Salvador. I went as a fairly silent observer. I spent my week watching teens and our youth leaders (adults) reach out to love on children, other teens and the beautiful people of El Salvador... Overall, I was incredibly grateful for the chance to go and I will be for-

holds in match play, it should help the offense settle while the new setting group finds tempo with Combs, Mullins and the middles.

The 2025 roster lists: Kayley Board (L, Sr), Madilyn Combs (OH, Sr), Katherine Floyd (RS, Sr), Cynthia Gabbard (OPP, So), Rylea Hogue (RS, Sr), Sophie Lawrence (DS, Jr), Elizabeth Lockard (MB, Jr), Kylie Lucas (RS, Sr), Jerrica Mullins (RS/OH, Sr) and Kendall Quinn (S, Jr). That senior-heavy lineup supplies match experience in nearly every phase, with the most obvious growth opportunity being the evolution of the setter-hitter connection and the emergence of consistent block-

grew up in, it’s special,” she said. “I want these girls to succeed, not just in softball, but in how they approach challenges in life.”

With the upcoming season on the horizon, Davis is focused on finalizing schedules, launching the fall strength and conditioning program, and building relationships with her players. Her long-term vision is clear: a Lady Lions softball program grounded in fundamentals, supported by a unified development

ever changed. I was reminded that loving others is not about our ability but rather our availability.”

The experience has created a desire among the students to return and engage in more mission work. When asked if they would go back, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Kaden Ellis expressed interest in experiencing different cultural celebrations: “I just wish we got to see more of their culture... I want to go during, like, Christmas or, like, you know, go during their, like, bigger holidays just to see, kind of how they celebrate.”

Youth leaders praised the students’ attitudes and willingness throughout the trip. “I couldn’t be more impressed with the youth I mean they did great the whole time,” said Curt Carrier. “They were so willing to do anything that anybody asked them to do.”

The trip included a relaxing beach day at the Pacific Ocean on their final day, providing the students with their first experience of the Pacific and some well-deserved recreation time after their busy week of service.

The Hyattsville Baptist Church youth mission trip to El Salvador exemplified how cross-cultural service can transform both those who serve and those who are served, creating lasting memories and changed perspectives that extend far beyond the week spent in Central America.

ing alongside Lockard.

The schedule opens with two road tests—Aug. 19 at Trinity Christian and Aug. 21 at Danville Christian—before the home opener on Aug. 26 against Danville. Early September brings trips to Mercer County (Sept. 2) and a home date with Lincoln County (Sept. 4), followed by Boyle County on the road (Sept. 8) and a return match with Danville Christian at home (Sept. 9). Garrard hosts East Jessamine on Sept. 18, then stages a three-team round-robin with Estill County and Rockcastle County on Sept. 20. Key late-September district fixtures include home matches with Mercer (Sept. 23), Boyle (Sept. 29) and Danville (Sept. 30). The October slate features Pulaski County at home (Oct. 4) and Madison Southern (Oct. 14).

system across all levels, and powered by the same passion for the game that has been part of her life for decades.

For Garrard County, Abby Davis’ return is more than just a coaching hire—it is a reunion with a hometown leader who understands the program’s history, sees its potential, and is determined to guide it into a new era of growth and success.



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Understanding The Big Beautiful Bill Tax Act Law
Part 1
In the past few years on your individual tax return, there have been credits for certain home improvements such as exterior doors, windows, HVAC, insulation, solar installation, etc. With the signing of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act Tax Law, these credits are set to expire December 31, 2025. If you are on the fence of doing these types of improvements now or next year, I advise 2025 is the year to take advantage of the current Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credit and the Residential Clean Energy Credit!



New Antioch Christian Church is inviting you and your families to our Fall Gospel Sing and cookout on Saturday, August 16! Activities for the kids begin at 3 p.m., cookout begins at 4 p.m., and the singing starts at 6 p.m. This promises to be a night fun and music! Food is provided, you just need to bring yourselves and your families!



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