

Mountain T.O.P.

Core Guide

Adults in Ministry 2023



Mountain T.O.P.
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Greetings!

Welcome to the guide with (nearly) all the resources you'll need to prepare a successful trip to Mountain T.O.P.! We are thrilled that you have decided to invest your money, time, and resources into the mission and vision of Mountain T.O.P. and our local community.

This packet contains a plethora of information, not just about the weekend of service, but about Mountain T.O.P. as a whole. As a partnership ministry, we consider your commitment to being prepared as part of your contribution to the mission. More importantly, we **honor those we are serving** when we choose to invest in learning who they are, what their context is, and what assets they bring to the table. Promoting the dignity of all people is of utmost importance to us.

Mountain T.O.P.'s values are faith, transformation, stewardship, and connection. You will see these values lived out in the way we work and worship together. We are motivated by the love of God to pursue the flourishing of all people. We are intentional about leveraging our resources and relationships in order to bring people together and achieve significant transformation. What starts out as a request for home repair assistance begins to take a new form as the Mountain T.O.P. staff develops a relationship with the family, and eventually graft volunteers into that relationship, as well. By the end of a project season when the punch list has finally been completed and tools have been stored away, something better than a roof has been left behind: hope.

Our homes have such an impact on our physical, mental, and financial health. This is why, after 47 years of ministry, we still find it important to help our neighbors live in safe, healthy, and accessible homes. Healthy homes lead to healthier families and healthier communities. We are committed to our work of holistically addressing the housing needs of our local community.

On behalf of the Mountain T.O.P. staff, we look forward to having you in camp soon!

Thankful to serve with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Keel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Keel, DMin
Program Director
julie@mountain-top.org

The Foundations of Mountain T.O.P.

Mission

Through Christian community and faith-based relationships, we help meet the physical, spiritual, social, and emotional needs of all people we encounter. We see all four needs as equally important, and through Adults in Ministry, we meet those needs through Major Home Repair and Fall Festival. We serve in partnership with other agencies, churches, governments, businesses, and community leaders to help develop the communities in which we work.

Mountain T.O.P. (Tennessee Outreach Project) is an interdenominational, non-profit Christian Mission affiliated with the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church, dedicated to rural life ministry in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee. Each year we welcome groups that come from Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, non-denominational backgrounds, among others.

Mountain T.O.P.'s 5 Focus Areas

- Eliminating Substandard Housing: to provide direct services and organizational support that addresses severe housing issues in our service area.
- Leadership: to foster growth among staff, participants, donors, and the community.
- Community Development: to engage in solutions with community partners for holistic and sustainable community growth.
- Education: to provide and support opportunities for lifelong learning and personal growth for all ages.
- Health: to promote lifestyles that support healthy choices.

Major Home Repair

In an effort to improve the substandard housing crisis in our community, Mountain T.O.P. dedicates the efforts of our adult volunteers to substantial housing repairs. We routinely address issues of structural integrity, replace shingle roofs with corrugated metal, replace dilapidated siding, renovate interior spaces, and install new windows. We know that improving a family's housing situation can have significant positive effects on their physical health, social connectedness, and personal wellbeing.

Ministry Production Teams (MPTs)

On Thursday evening, our staff will facilitate the breakdown of teams. Our goal is to create teams with a mix of experience, skills, and backgrounds. This both ensures that every project will have the necessary knowledge to complete the tasks and that volunteers are stretched and meet new people. For this reason, we try to keep family members, churches, and friends separate when possible.

On any worksite, there is work for every skill level. Because we value meeting the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the family, we encourage Mountain T.O.P. volunteers to spend time building relationships with the families, from a socially-appropriate distance! Furthermore, each Ministry Production Team (MPT) has a Point Person. This person is a pre-designated volunteer that serves as a liaison between Mountain T.O.P.'s Service Area

Managers and the rest of the team. The Point Person may have specific experience necessary for the particular project or a plethora of Mountain T.O.P. experience that can help the group feel comfortable on the worksite.

Fall Festival

What started as a shoe distribution event in 2012 has blossomed into a full community fun event for families. Every year, community partners are invited to offer activities, carnival games, or giveaways for children in the hopes that parents would visit their tables to learn about programs. Mountain T.O.P. is simply the location where we can come together to create an event that meets practical needs in addition to community connectedness. Just like Major Home Repair, the Festival meets all four needs: social, emotional, physical, and spiritual. People pay \$1 or give 1 non-expired canned food item per person to enter. Most items given away at the Fall Festival are donated by individuals or churches, locally and within the wider Mountain T.O.P. network. Such items include coats, shoes, socks, winter accessories, and hygiene items.

Fall Festival this year will take place on Saturday, October 28th during the fourth AIM weekend. Volunteers who register for that weekend have the option to spend their weekend serving at the Fall Festival, helping with event setup & breakdown, fitting families for coats, preparing lunch, and fitting folks for shoes.

Margin Retreat

This year on the first weekend of Fall AIM (October 5-8th), you have the option to participate in a retreat led by long-time friend of the ministry and graduate of Vanderbilt Divinity School, Rachael Jorstad. This is a concurrent program to the Major Home Repair during Weekend 1, so the participants of the Margin Retreat will form their own MPT separate from the Major Home Repair. Together, we will learn those unforced rhythms of grace, get away and come close to God, recover our lives and take a rest. Join us as we lay down what is heavy and ill-fitting and keep company with the One who teaches us to live freely and lightly. We'll engage in a variety of spiritual practices: silence, solitude, conversation, and delight. Some practices may be very familiar to you and others may be new. There will be time to rest, to pray, to share stories, and to encourage one another.

Community Field Trip

Join us early on Thursday for a surprise optional outing in the county to visit other outreach programs that Mountain T.O.P. partners with! Arrive at your field trip location by 3 pm to participate at no additional cost. Your field trip location will be announced at a later date and communicated to all who are participating. This is an opportunity to learn more about the additional assets Grundy and Marion counties have to offer as well as historical context for Appalachian communities.

Programming Philosophy

We desire to expose our participants to a variety of worship styles because we value the beauty of connecting with the Lord in different ways. Built into our daily schedule are four times to worship, either individually, in a small group, or as a whole community. Each day starts with a group devotional time, led by a member of the camp community, during the day a staff

member will lead a small group discussion on-site with the Ministry Production Team (MPT), and each evening ends with a time of sharing and a time of corporate worship. Community singing will be part of worship only when we are able to be outside. We will practice physical distancing during worship and community events. Participants are encouraged to wear a mask.

Safety

Mountain T.O.P. is committed to creating a safe environment—physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually—for all involved. Background checks are mandatory and are to be on file either at the church or with Mountain T.O.P. for all participants 18 years old and older. We trust that groups will appropriately screen their adult participants for the safety of the camp community and the families we work with.

Due to COVID-19, we have implemented several physical safety protocols in the event someone were to test positive or be exposed while in camp. You can read about those specifically in the following pages.

COVID-19 Protocols

As of Sept. 1, 2022

Mountain T.O.P. is looking forward to this fall season of ministry! For the health and safety of all involved we have certain requirements for volunteers this season:

All volunteers are highly encouraged to be vaccinated prior to participating in Mountain T.O.P. If you are not vaccinated, Mountain T.O.P. recommends a negative COVID-19 test within 3 days of arriving at camp.

While we are not asking for proof of vaccinations or negative tests, there will be space on forms to indicate these requirements.

Our goal this fall is to keep everyone, volunteers, staff and community members, healthy and safe. We have come to this decision having reviewed CDC and ACA (American Camp Association) guidelines and taking into account vaccine accessibility. We understand and respect the decisions you must make for your personal health and faith. We work in a region where access to quality healthcare can be a challenge, therefore we must take proper precautions to avoid putting anyone at risk. COVID-19 is still prevalent throughout the country and Appalachia, and we must do everything we can to mitigate risks.

Mountain T.O.P. will continue to monitor the situation and receive guidance from local health officials, the CDC and the American Camping Association. We will stay in communication with any updates or changes to this guidance. We appreciate your willingness to serve and your flexibility as we navigate this situation. We look forward to working with you!

Fees, Payments, and Refunds

- Our weekend fee is \$225 unless you are a former staff person or first-time participant, and then the fee is \$185. There are no payment deadlines at this time; however, a registration is not complete until we have received payment.
- We will offer a 100% refund on any cancellations that are due to Covid-19 related issues.
- If you need to pay by check, select the "Pay Later" option during checkout. Please contact Chad (chad@mountain-top.org) with any questions.

Programming & Meals

- All participants are encouraged to bring masks. Mountain T.O.P. will have a supply of masks, hand sanitizer, and gloves to distribute as needed.
- Lunches will be packed by the kitchen staff in coolers for you to bring to the worksite.
- Meals served in camp will be served family style.

- We will try to be outside for worship and community events as much as possible, not only to enjoy the beauty of our surroundings but to limit exposure if someone were to test positive while at camp.

Cleaning Procedures

- As a camp community, we will be following enhanced cleaning and disinfecting procedures as outlined by the [American Camping Association](#). All PPE required for cleaning will be provided by Mountain T.O.P.

Medical Procedures and Illness

- We request that all participants please monitor yourself for the 48 hours before you come for COVID-19 symptoms.
- While we have recommendations for before you all arrive, most of our procedures are now focused on if someone were to test positive while in camp. Vaccinations are not required for camp participation, but our protocols will differ based on vaccination status.

Expectations for Participation

Adult Self-Screening Forms

All adults ages 18 and over need to have completed a satisfactory and current (within the last 3 years) background check before they arrive at camp. Background checks can be run by the participant's church or by Mountain T.O.P. for \$10/check. If your background check is on file with your church, your form must have the signature of an on-staff pastor. If you cannot obtain this signature, Mountain T.O.P. will process a background check for you.

Dress Code

The dress code applies to all genders. Shirts are to be worn at all times. Shirts with beer, liquor or other possibly offensive subject matter should not be brought to camp. Additionally, halter or spaghetti-strap tops, bathing suit tops, sports bras, shorts with an inseam less than 4" and jeans with offensive holes are not appropriate and should not be brought to camp.

- **Major Home Repair:** For safety reasons, participants serving in Major Home Repair are to wear long pants (**no** leggings or yoga pants), closed-toe and hard-sole shoes and shirts with at least short sleeves during the workday. Scrubs are allowed.

Electronic Devices & Social Media

We discourage the use of electronic devices as they can become a barrier in the spiritual practice of building community; however, participants are encouraged to have a cell phone with them during the day in case of emergencies and to communicate with the camp staff. Devices are not to be used during any programming events. Adults should never interact with youth on social media without the permission of the parents.

Tobacco

The use of tobacco is discouraged and prohibited in some cases due to camp regulations, sensitivity and fire hazards. Anyone under the age of 18 is prohibited from smoking, using, or possessing tobacco in any form—including vaping and electronic cigarettes. Mountain T.O.P. recognizes the need to establish a designated tobacco area for those who use tobacco. This designated area is to be in a private and discreet area of camp. This is due to our desire to discourage the use of tobacco products and the need to not promote the use of tobacco as a social activity or as a part of the community process.

Alcohol & Drugs

Do not bring any alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs to camp. Those who bring such items can be sent home at their personal expense. Sharing of prescription drugs is strictly prohibited. Those who do can be sent home at the participants' expense.

Fireworks

Do not bring fireworks into camp – these are dangerous items, especially in wooded areas.

Abuse Tolerance

Mountain T.O.P. has a zero tolerance for abuse. It is the responsibility of every participant to act in the best interest of other volunteers and community families at all times. In the event any participant observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, "grooming," etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, or virtual) it is the responsibility of each such participant to immediately report their observations to the Mountain T.O.P. staff.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

Mountain T.O.P. is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for all people and intends to create and foster a culture of communication, reporting safety concerns, or policy violations. Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with Mountain T.O.P. policies and state law, to the Department of Children's Services and/or other appropriate agencies. Any person over the age of 18 while in the State of Tennessee is a mandated reporter so any suspicion of abuse and neglect must be taken seriously.

The Mountain T.O.P. Staff has overall responsibility for all activities. Therefore, camp directions and expectations given by the staff are to be followed.

Preparation & Packing Checklist

Preparation Checklist

- Register online
- Pay your camper fee by card or check prior to arrival
- Study this Core Guide!
- Seek prayer support from your home faith community.
- Email in Adult Self-Screening form prior to arrival and secure current and satisfactory background check
- Complete the Medical Form & Statement of Release, and bring TWO copies to camp
- Make travel plans that will ensure your arrival at Camp Cumberland Pines by 5:00 pm, Central Time, on the Thursday of your camp weekend.
- Enjoy your time of service!
- Debrief your experience as a mission team or individual back home. Share with your home faith community!

Packing Checklist

- Cloth or surgical masks
- Bedding for a twin bed (pillow, sheets or sleeping bag, blanket)
- Toiletries, towels, washcloths, shower shoes
- Enough clothes for the time you are here (no laundry facilities available), including clothing for home repair/painting (long pants, closed-toed shoes are mandatory)
- Jacket, rain coat (the evenings can get cool on the Mountain, especially in the fall)
- Ear plugs (will help a great deal with the potential nightly noise factor)
- Bible, journal
- Any musical instrument you play that you'd like to assist in worship with
- Flashlight
- Bug spray and sunscreen
- Water bottle and travel mug (optional, but very helpful)
- Tools (see list below)

Major Home Repair Tool Requirements

All MHR participants must bring the following tools:

- Hammer
- Carpenter's pencil
- Nail apron
- Work gloves
- 25' Tape measure
- Safety glasses
- Utility knife

Additional helpful tools: screwdrivers, pliers, wrenches, chisels, pry bars, wrecking bars, nail puller, framing square, levels, hack saw, chalk lines, circular saw, reciprocating saw, miter saw, table saw, electric drill (& bits), cordless drill (& bits), extension cords, air compressors, hoses, framing nail guns, cordless impact drivers. *An email with project descriptions and specific tool requests will be sent prior to the weekend.*

Weekend Schedule

Thursday

- 3:00 pm Arrive by 3 pm for an optional Community Field Trip!
- 5:00 pm Registration, including medical screenings
- 6:00 pm Dinner
- Community Orientation
- Worship
- Field Orientation
- Ministry Production Team (MPT) Breakdown & Project Assignments

Friday & Saturday

- 7:00 am Group Morning Devotional
- 7:30 am Breakfast
- 8:00 am MPTs meet & leave for project sites
- 5:00 pm All MPTs return to camp
- 6:00 pm Dinner
- Sharing
- Worship
- Fellowship time

Sunday

- 6:45 am Group Morning Devotional
- 7:00 am Breakfast
- 7:30 am Camp evaluation
- Clean-up
- Closing Circle
- 8:15 am Departure

The importance of our weekend schedule...

Please try to arrive at Camp Cumberland Pines by 5:00 pm, Central Time, on the Thursday of your weekend. The preparation we do on Thursday evening lays the foundation for the rest of the weekend, so it is helpful if all volunteers are present by this time. Further, we start earlier on Sunday morning because we know that some need to get on the road as soon as possible. We appreciate all participants staying through Closing Circle on Sunday morning. This is especially helpful in our camp cleaning efforts as we, together, prepare our facilities for future volunteers.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the sleeping accommodations like?

Participants stay in cabins on site. These two cabins have 10 rooms with either two sets of bunk beds or two twin beds. This year we are limiting our weekend capacity so that there will be only one person or family unit per room. There are bathrooms and a common area in each cabin, along with a refrigerator, coffee station, and beautiful porch to enjoy. Participants are responsible for providing their own bedding and towels.

How are meals provided?

Breakfast and dinner are hot meals provided in our Dining Hall. Our kitchen staff will prepare cooler lunches for you to take to the work site. All meals from Thursday dinner to Sunday breakfast are provided, and served family style. Our kitchen staff can accommodate dietary needs and allergies. We ask that if you have dietary lifestyle choices that you assist our kitchen staff by providing some of your own food. Please contact Chad for further questions (Chad@mountain-top.org).

I don't have any construction experience. Is this a good place for me?

Absolutely! This is why we create Ministry Production Teams (MPTs) so those with little to no skill can be taught by those who do. We see that there are four needs that need to be addressed: physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. While the physical needs will be met through the home repair work, we highly emphasize building relationships with the families. Taking time to get to know the family is important. Additionally, there are always small tasks to help with, including site clean up and safety coordination.

Where exactly am I going, and how do I get there?

The physical address for Camp Cumberland Pines is: 480 Old Hwy 56, Coalmont, TN 37313. We suggest using Google Maps for navigational purposes. You can search "[Mountain Top](#)" and it will direct you to the correct place!

Resources

Check out these videos and resources to learn more about our community and ministry:

Mountain T.O.P.'s Official Promo video

> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQhGrnErLI4&t=>

Beersheba Springs Medical Clinic video

> <https://youtu.be/3Qgpe-zeu6A>

Mastered in Grundy County: Learn about the state economic and community development board. The people in this video are actual residents and employees. The man in the beginning of the video is our county mayor.

> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHWHkYeMaE4&feature=youtu.be>

In March 2019, Grundy County was featured in an online rural news outlet, the Daily Yonder. Read about local efforts to improve our health outcomes.

> <https://www.dailyyonder.com/healthy-attitude-leaders-rural-tenn-county-dig-address-disparities/2019/03/19/30922/>

Learn more about Grundy County's health outcomes, provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Spend some time comparing them to your own county!

> <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/tennessee/2020/overview>

"How Home Affects Health," an article from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation about the connection between housing and health.

> <https://www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2019/03/how-home-affects-health.html>

Debriefing your trip

We encourage all participants to find a way to debrief their trip as a way to bring closure to their experience. Here are a few ways you can approach this:

- Do some personal reflection using the following questions as a starting point:
 - > What happened during my weekend that I want to remember?
 - > How did you see God while serving at Mountain T.O.P.?
 - > How were your preconceptions about housing, health, poverty, or others challenged?
 - > How has your definition of courage changed because of your experience?
 - > How will you allow yourself to be changed by this experience? What happens next?
- Oftentimes, after we return from a mission experience people ask us “How was it?” Consider what is the one dominant theme that you would like to share about that God taught you. Take some time to form an articulate and concise response so you are ready when people ask. Every time someone asks, you have the chance to reinforce that learning in your own heart.
- During the car ride home and talk with your traveling companions about your individual and shared experiences.
 - > How can you form some level of accountability between your group to hold onto these learnings?
 - > How can this group that served together continue to meet together?
- Schedule a time to share with your church congregation, Sunday school class, or small group about your experience. (This also serves as a great opportunity to recruit some friends to join you next time!)

Medical Information Form

Last Name _____ First _____ MI _____

Address _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Occupation _____

*Social Security Number _____ Date of Birth _____

Church _____ Church City, State _____

Personal Physician _____ Phone _____

*Insurance Company _____ *Phone _____

*Policy # _____ *Insured ID # _____ *Prescription Card # _____

In case of emergency contact:

Name _____ Relationship _____

Primary Phone: _____ Alternative Phone: _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Primary Phone: _____ Alternative Phone: _____

Medication(s) you cannot take

Medication you are currently taking

These medications are to be administered by (circle one): Self / Staff

Allergies / special health problems or concerns

Do you have a current tetanus shot? Yes / No If yes, indicate date _____

If no, we encourage you to get one before you come.

***In lieu of this information, you may provide a copy of the front and back of your medical insurance card. Both pages must be FULLY completed and kept in the vehicle in which you are traveling at all times.**

Statement of Activities & Release Form

Mountain T.O.P. is a Christian Service ministry with the people of the Cumberland Mountains in Tennessee. Volunteers participating in the activities of this ministry will be expected to be involved in all activities and to respect the people of the Cumberland Mountains at all times.

Volunteers will participate in (but will not be limited to) home repair projects and work with local youth as need is determined and are within the capability of the volunteer service team. These activities may include the use of hand tools and the handling of materials and supplies. Power tools will only be used if the individual has the necessary skills to appropriately handle the power tool. Participants are never forced or required to engage in any work or activity in which they feel they are not able to participate safely.

Participants understand that photos and videos may be taken during the course of the camp week that may be used by Mountain T.O.P. in the future promotion of our ministries and programs.

Participants are expected to follow all guidelines of participation, philosophies, and expectations set by the organization and camp staff. Examples of unacceptable behavior include sneaking out after lights out, violating the tobacco policy, abuse or harassment, and other Mountain T.O.P. policies, going to places in the area which have been identified by camp staff as dangerous, and being disruptive to the camp life.

We acknowledge that every effort has been made in preparing the participants for this mission experience. We therefore release Mountain T.O.P., Incorporated, its agents, employees, and any and all persons connected therewith from any and all liability, claims, and causes of action of any type whatsoever arising out of or in any way connected with participation in the activities of the Mountain T.O.P., this includes releasing Mountain T.O.P. of any liability connected with COVID-19.

Further, consent/permission is given for (participant) _____ to be treated by competent medical personnel in the event of an accident or medical emergency and to receive reasonable medical treatment as deemed necessary by a licensed physician.

In the event treatment is called for which a physician and/or other professional health care provider in the hospital/clinic refuses to administer without my consent, we hereby authorize:

MTOP Camp Director: Mike Feely

to give such consent for us in the event that we are not readily accessible by phone. If in the event it becomes necessary for either of the identified persons to give consent for us, we agree to hold such person free and harmless of any claims, demands, or suits for damages arising from giving such consent. We understand that Mountain T.O.P. requires proof of personal insurance or acknowledgment of financial responsibility for all medical expenses. We agree that our insurance company (if applicable) will be used for all necessary medical expenses and we are aware that we may be billed by the medical provider for any medical expenses not covered by our personal insurance policy and will be responsible for payment of those expenses.

This is the _____ day of _____, 2022.

Signature (Participant)

Adult Self-Screening Form

****Form must be completed and background check administered for ALL participants 18 & older***

Camp Weekend Dates: _____

Church _____

Last Name _____ First _____ MI _____

Address _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Occupation and Employer _____

*Social Security Number _____ Date of Birth _____

1. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? **Yes** **No**
2. Have you ever been convicted or formally accused of any sex related or child abuse offense? **Yes** **No**
3. Have you had a background check completed within the past 3 years to verify the responses to the above questions that is on file either with your church or MTOP? **Yes** **No**
4. Have you read and understood the contents of the Core Guide packet? **Yes** **No**

If you answered **YES** to questions #1 and/or #2, please fully explain on the back of the form.

If you answered **YES** to #3, what was the date of your background check: _____

If you answered **NO** to question #3, you must have a background check completed before arrival to camp. If your church does not offer this service, Mountain T.O.P. will have one processed.

You will need to reimburse Mountain T.O.P. for this cost of \$10.

YES, we need Mountain T.O.P. to process a background check for me. *SSN only needed if Mountain T.O.P. is completing your background check.

I fully support Mountain T.O.P. 's effort to increase the probability of having a safe environment in our camp week for youth to perform mission work without fear of irresponsible adults who may take advantage of them or put them at risk of being hurt. I certify, to the best of my knowledge, the information that I have provided on this form is true and accurate. I authorize any investigation, including a background check, of any or all statements made on this form.

Signature _____ Date _____

Senior Pastor Signature _____ Date _____

Pastor signature is only needed if your background check is on file at your church.