



Appalachian Experience

St. Joseph's Housing Repair Program

Giving Stewards

We did some hard work, met new people, learned new things & had a great time!

For those of you who don't know, St. Joseph's, Mantua, sent a group to St. Joseph's in Clintwood, Virginia, to take part in Sister Jean Korkisch's Housing Repair Program this summer. Helping low-income residents maintain decent housing for their families, the program has groups work on housing repair jobs both inside and out.

Appalachian Experience 2005 began Saturday, June 25, with the group meeting at Eat 'n Park Restaurant in Streetsboro before heading down the highway. This year's participants included Bill Curtin, Mike & Barb Shilling, George, Kathi, James & Jeff Trares, and Jessica Lovick. After a hearty breakfast, most caravanned the 400 mile trip south & arrived at the Dorothy Baker House about 4:00 p.m. (Shillings arrived Sunday). Saturday & Sunday's activities included settling in, planning & shopping for the week's meals, attending Mass, and visiting the Ralph Stanley Museum and Traditional Mountain Music Center located within in walking distance. Jarvis, a past recipient of repairs on his family's home who now helps Sr. Jean, welcomed the group & spoke of plans for the week's work.

Although, this year's group was smaller than previous ones, the eight representatives of our parish along with program helpers Jarvis & Debbie, accomplished quite a bit of work on Sr. Bernie Kenny's kitchen, basement, shed, stairs & other outdoor areas. Sr. Bernie Kenny & Teresa Gardner, both nurse practitioners, co-manage the St.

Mary's Health Wagon, a non-profit healthcare corporation delivering quality mobile health services to the uninsured, underinsured and those in need in the Appalachian Mountains.

Living in an old "coal town" house near her office in Clincho, VA, Sr. Bernie was in desperate need of repairs to her kitchen floor which had water damage (foundation & wall studs were deteriorating & pipes had burst due to poorly insulated walls). Volunteers removed the damaged flooring, paneling, wall studs & floor joists. After reinforcing the floor & walls, insulation was put in, plywood & luan was laid followed by new linoleum. Repairs were also made to the windows' frames along with the addition of caulking & baseboards. A new sink cabinet & countertop, new dryer vent, and linoleum lining inside all her cupboards & drawers were also installed.

Members of the group also made improvements to Sr. Bernie's dirt-floored basement by cleaning out rotting debris and laying down patio blocks for easier access to the fuel oil tank, furnace & hot water tank. In addition, a ramp was added to her shed, a dozen set of solid concrete block steps were added to the hillside leading to her shed, the wooden steps & railing from the road up the hill to her home were cleaned & re-stained, and a large patio block path to her driveway area was constructed.

On the final day of the work week, Sr. Bernie joined the volunteers for lunch in her yard as she shared her experience with the mobile health wagon which was founded in 1980 &



has been improving the health and well-being of the underserved for the past 25 years. The areas served by the mobile health services lie deep within the heart of Central Appalachia. Poor health indicators, geographic isolation, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of communication resources and transportation, and a proud culture of independence and self reliance join with a severe dearth of specialty providers and a dedicated but overworked primary care network to perpetuate access problems. All services and medications are provided free of charge; however, clients are encouraged to make voluntary donations to help with the purchase of gas, medication and supplies (a client gave Sr. Bernie some moonshine for services he received!). Each year, St. Mary's Health Wagon organizes a Remote Area Medical Health Expedition (RAM) at the Wise County Fairgrounds. This huge three-day undertaking provides health services free of charge to adults & children. Volunteer medical &

trained health care professionals offer dental cleanings, fillings & extractions; complete eye exams, prescription glasses, and treatment/referrals for eye diseases; general medical exams, diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol, bone density, & cancer screenings, blood & lab work, P A P smears, mammograms, medical assistance; and much more. Appalachian Experience volunteers were able to tour Sr. Bernie's office and the mobile health wagon (a Winnebago specifically designed to meet medical needs). In addition, the group heard accounts of patients they have helped, problems the health wagon has encountered with the coal strikes & law enforcement, and concerns about sponsorship. Truly amazed at the work that was done to her home, Sr. Bernie was genuinely touched by the group's efforts. To learn more about this health outreach effort, please visit www.stmaryshealthwagon.com.

Not only do volunteers do some hard but rewarding work, meet new people, and learn new things, but cultural events, local site-seeing & discussions around Appalachian issues are also a part of the experience. In addition to hearing about the work of the Health Wagon, on Tuesday evening, volunteers enjoyed a picnic supper hosted by parishioners followed by entertainment from folk singer & storyteller, Ken Childress & fellow musician Jim Mullins.

After the day's work & supper on Wednesday, the group drove to the nearby home of Vincent and Fanchette Fanelli to hear their presentation on The Fourth

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ST. JOSEPH'S HOUSING REPAIR PROGRAM

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Dorothy Baker House:
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**Offering Home Repairs
to the Low-Income
People of Appalachia**

Learning About Appalachia

(Continued from page 1)

World Movement International Volunteer Corps of which they take an active role in their community as well as being members of the organization. A human commitment to ending poverty and exclusion, The Fourth World Movement is an international, non-governmental, anti-poverty organization with consultative status in the United Nations. Believing that wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated, this effort is made up of 370 full-time volunteers and 60,000 active members who are working in 29 countries on six continents. The Fanellis' principal objectives in Appalachia has been to work with and support community efforts to combat poverty and its consequences, to build partnerships with state advocacy groups in order to influence legislation on behalf of the poor, and to welcome other members of the Movement for periods of service to the community as well as a learning experience. At the Binns-Counts Community Center, Vincent teaches a free computer literacy program for adults and Fanchette helps out with clothing sales, which raise funds towards the operating costs of the center as well as providing inexpensive clothing for local people. These volunteers' search for partnership with other organizations and services based in the community has led Vincent to assist the St. Mary's Health Wagon with their computer

system, and more recently, with their telemedicine hook-up, a vital tool in an area where access to health care is extremely limited. The couple live in an old five-room frame house purchased by the Fourth World Movement/USA & renovated with the help of friends and outside work groups. The 18-acre mostly wooded land on a ridge slope also has a barn and two outbuildings. The property is currently being developed as a learning and resource center, both for the local area and for the U.S. Movement. Fanchette continues to work on the draft of her book on Joseph Wresinski and his role in developing the Fourth World Movement in the United States. For more information about the Fourth World Movement including an effort called Tapori in which children can become involved in the fight against poverty, please visit www.atd-4thworld.org.

**Watch for photos & links on the
Appalachian Experience page
of our parish website.**

Appalachian Experience participants genuinely feel a sense of accomplishment helping the truly needy of this area be safe, warm & dry. Not only did they work hard but they've acquired friendships & a camaraderie with those they worked for & with. You are welcome to join us in future trips as we follow Jesus' example and use our gifts to reach out to others!

How Can I Get Involved?

Our parish is planning to send a group again next summer, the week of June 24 through July 1, 2006. Average-sized, "workable" groups are 15-20 people. Adults & teens are encouraged to participate. It is suggested that youth groups have at least one adult for every five youth & participants be of high school age or older (junior high youth may attend with a parent). If you have ever pounded a nail, sawed wood, laid tile, painted, hung wallpaper, or performed ordinary repairs & maintenance on your own home, you can handle the work. You won't be asked to do anything beyond your strength or skill level. Safety is of primary concern. Inexperienced individuals/groups may wish to hold a "hands on" training session to familiarize them with repair work. If you would like to be a part of next year's effort, watch for details in the bulletin early in 2006 or call the Parish Office (274-2253).

Financial backing for the program & patronage of fundraising efforts are also essential. Fees for volunteer groups are \$175.00 per person which covers lodging, materials for work projects, and related

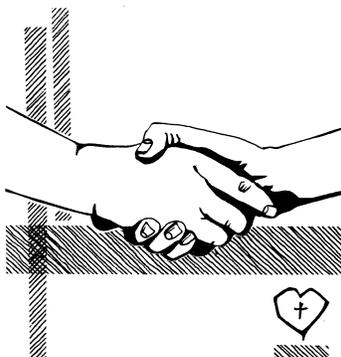
expenses. Food expenses of approximately \$50.00 per person plus gas money for the trip down (it's about 400 miles to Clintwood) & to work sites are also required. The parish & participants help to defray these costs but the group would prefer to earn most of their way through fundraisers & donations. Any support you can provide is greatly appreciated.

Although the majority of supplies are purchased in the Clintwood area to help support the local economy, there are some

items that are used continually. Ongoing needs of the St. Joseph Housing Repair Program include nails, work gloves, dust masks, rags, and good paint brushes. The Dorothy Baker House is a fully equipped household, however, groups do need to bring their own paper supplies, trash bags, personal items, dish soap & laundry detergent (laundromat is nearby).

If you or someone you know has a working computer that they would like to donate to a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, Sr. Jean would be most grateful to be put in touch with them. She may be reached at (276) 926-4328.

Of course, your prayers & words of encouragement for the group's successful efforts & safe trip are most appreciated. God bless.



*"Let your light shine before others so
that they may see your good works and
give glory to your Father in heaven."*

— Matthew 5:16