



Appalachian Experience

**St. Joseph's
Housing
Repair
Program**

Giving Stewards

We worked hard, met new people, learned new things & had a rewarding time!

Once again 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 2008 began Saturday, June 21, with most of the group meeting at the Shalersville Turnpike entrance to begin the 400 mile journey south. This year's participants included George, Kathi & Jeff Trares, Mike & Barb Shilling from St. Joseph Parish, Jackie Kable, Marisa Grondin & Amanda Scopilliti from St. Ambrose Parish in Garrettsville, and Toni Schill (Jackie's sister) from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Aurora. Shortly after arrival at the Dorothy Baker House the group attended Mass and then met with Sr. Jean who welcomed the group & spoke of plans for the week's work. Settling in activities included planning & shopping for the week's meals, and enjoying Breaks Interstate Park's scenic overlooks, hiking trails and paddled boats, and relaxing.

This year's group of nine participants had some new people and some who have participated in the program for a number of years. Working on mainly one home along with program helpers Debbie, Leanne, Brandi & Josh, the group accomplished quite a bit of work throughout the week. The family home of Wayne, built in 1927, was within walking distance of their home base and at one time had been a town showpiece.



Appalachian Experience 2008 Group with home owner & program employees

With much assistance from the homeowner, volunteers helped to bring it back to life. Members raised and leveled the leaning back porch adding windows, siding, paint and awning-like shutters to open during summer months. The yard received much needed improvements including a new fence, landscaping to walkways and flower beds, and clearing of brush and debris. Window frames and metal lawn chairs were painted and caulking was also done. Some members of the group tackled the monumental task of clearing the many years of accumulated items and dirt inside the house. In addition, a couple of the participants finished a few items of the porch of a nearby house worked on in the previous week.

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. On Tuesday evening, volunteers enjoyed a picnic hosted by

parishioners followed by entertainment from folk singer & storyteller, Ken Childress & fellow musician Jim Mullins. A visit to the 4th World Movement Co-Op Learning Center was on Wednesday's agenda. 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. Vincent and Fanchette Fanelli, who take an active role in their community as well as being members of the organization The Fourth World Movement International Volunteer Corps, are members of St. Joseph Parish in Clintwood. The center hosts a variety of things to assist with employment opportunities, gaining new skills & confidence including computer classes, stress management sessions, quilting & weaving instruction, and other workshops. It also takes part in house-improvement projects coordinated by Binns-Counts Community Center. For

more information, please visit www.4thworldmovement.org.

MAWs (Mountain Art Works) Restaurant & Gallery, was Thursday evening's point of interest where the group enjoyed the homey atmosphere and a mountain music jam session. On Friday evening, the group heard about the coal mining industry from parishioner Larry Kennedy who worked in the mines for over 20 years (he now works for Social Services). Larry brought his tools of the trade & explained his work experience and the impact of mechanization & strip mining on the industry. Poverty remains in this Appalachian region due the impact by the coal, gas and timber industries, and absentee ownership. There are no other industries willing to commit to this area because of a lack of any major interstate system in this remote area in the southwestern tip of Virginia and a state government yet to recognize and/or act on the many of the needs of this part of their own state. Despite the poverty, and land and water devastation, these proud people are determined to assume control of their destiny. St. Joseph's in Clintwood, VA is one of several churches in this area that has formed a ministerial association to meet some of the needs of local residents.

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 this outreach effort in future trips as we follow Jesus' example and use our gifts to reach out to others!