

APPALACHIAN EXPERIENCE 2012

A group of eleven volunteers from Mantua's St. Joseph Parish recently participated in the Housing Repair Program out of St. Joseph Church in Clintwood, Virginia. Offering home repairs to the low-income people of Appalachia this outreach effort is coordinated by Sr. Jean Korkisch, CSC, who helps to ensure that those in need are warm, dry, and safe.

The group made the 400 mile trip to the western tip of Virginia and were able to work on the homes of three different families during the week of June 16-23. On Sunday most of the group traveled to The Breaks Interstate Park to enjoy site-seeing and hiking in this recreational area located in both in Virginia & Kentucky before work began for the week.

The majority of the group, which included Bill Curtin, Joe & Nate Daczko, Dane Engelhart, Dan & Sean Fejes, Patrick Myers, Mike Shilling, and George Trares worked on the home of Jason & Mandy who had two young children. The job involved adding a deck with steps, railing, and tin roof to the front of the home. Program helpers Debbie, Leann, and Jeff assisted them throughout the week. They also attached a small porch to the back of their home and stained it.

Caitlin Chartier & Kathi Trares worked with program helper Brandi on the home of Joe who needed repairs to his back porch. The threesome replaced decking boards, painted the porch posts and ceiling, and added skirting. In addition they power washed the house, made lids for two rain barrels, attached down spouting, and installed crawl space vent covers. At the end of the work week, several members of the group went to the home of Larry & Lizzie to attach a ramp to their home. Others helped to clean out and organize the basement storage area for the program.

In addition to a lot of hard work and learning new skills, part of this experience is to learn about Appalachian issues, take part in cultural events, and to do some local site-seeing. Each evening the volunteers had the opportunity to do just that. On Monday the group thoroughly enjoyed the trip on a 10 mile windy and mostly gravel road to Birch Knob Observation Tower just north of Clintwood. At an elevation of 3,144 feet above sea level, the 183 stair climb to reach the top and staying until sunset was well worth the trek. Once the site of a fire tower, the view from a rock outcrop at the highest summit of Pine Mountain allows one to see Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and, on a clear day, Ohio. On Tuesday evening, volunteers enjoyed a picnic hosted by parishioners followed by entertainment from folk singer and storyteller, Jim Mullins, and fellow musician Kathy Reynolds. 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, woodworking, quilting and weaving instruction, and other workshops. On Thursday,

the group traveled to nearby Pound, Virginia to enjoy "Pickin' in the Pound", a bluegrass jam session held at the town hall. Many members even joined in with dancing and singing. On Friday afternoon many of the group enjoyed swimming at nearby Bear Pen Swimming Pool and then later enjoyed an evening bonfire and s'mores at Sr. Jean's home where everyone shared thoughts of their experience.

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



Be sure to visit www.stjosephmantua.com/appalachian.html for more photos and information.