

## St. Joseph's Appalachian Experience

Mantua's St. Joseph Parish takes part in the Binns-Counts Community Center's Housing Repair Program. Coordinators line up projects suited to the make-up and skills of each work group. Participants will be doing household repairs at owner occupied homes of low-income residents of southwestern Virginia. Volunteers should be prepared to do some hard work, meet new people, and learn new things. Cultural events, local site-seeing & discussions around Appalachian issues are also a part of the experience. Members of the Parish Community of St. Joseph in Mantua, Ohio, have been participating in this outreach effort since 1998 and named their group "Appalachian Experience".

### What To Expect

Participants will be staying in the "Bunk House" of the Binns-Counts Center in McClure, VA. All participants are expected to work the 5 full week days during the group's week. Groups work together to prepare their own meals & share general housekeeping duties in this dormitory-style, refurbished lumber company building. There are three bunkrooms upstairs—one with 12 beds, one with 14 beds, and another with 4 beds. There is also one room downstairs with 2 beds and space for another if needed. The facility has 5 showers and 5 bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, dining area, washer & dryer, phone with unlimited long distance (poor cell signal in area), and a gathering space with tv and internet access.



All adult volunteers (18+) who work with children must be fingerprinted and participate in the Diocese of Youngtown's VIRTUS safe environment training before going. Volunteers will conduct themselves in a proper, respectful & courteous manner at all times taking an active role in all aspects of the program. They will not be judgmental about families, homes, personal choices or lifestyles of the people whose homes they work on. Participants should not make any promises to families that they might not be able to keep. Opportunities will be provided in the evenings to express cares, concerns, questions & comments. Use of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, and weapons are strictly prohibited & will not be tolerated. Tobacco use is not permitted by students (adults are not permitted to smoke in house). Use discretion regarding clothing (modest shorts and tops acceptable; shoes must be worn on job sites). Foul language will not be tolerated.

Helping low-income residents maintain decent housing for their families, we will be doing several housing repair jobs both inside and out. 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 but are encouraged to try new things & learn new skills. Safety is our primary concern. Youth groups should have at least one adult for every five youth & students are required to be of high school age.

Plan to participate in several local events while in the area. Groups attend 5:00 p.m. Mass Saturday at St. Joseph's in Clintwood. Recreational options for Sunday and some evenings include Breaks Interstate Park, Ralph Stanley Museum, hearing bluegrass music, 4th World, Movement, other location attractions, and to get acquainted with the community . . . All part of the "Appalachian Experience"!

### AVAILABLE IN McCLURE & NEARBY CLINTWOOD (10 min. away) . . .

- ❖ Supermarket, Dollar Stores & Post Office
- ❖ Laundromat, several fast food restaurants & gas stations
- ❖ Hospital & med-center facilities

### What To Bring



- One Small Suitcase or Bag (please pack light to save space in vehicles)
  - Work clothing (old clothes that you don't mind getting dirty, painted, stained, etc.);
- 1-2 outfits can be worn throughout week; some jobs may require long pants & sleeves.
- Sturdy, comfortable shoes (i.e. work boots or tennis shoes; no sandals on work sites).
  - Casual clothing & shoes for non-work times—3-4 outfits are plenty (includes outfit for Mass).
  - Jacket (rain gear, optional).
  - Sun protection (sunscreen, hat).
  - Personal medications, emergency info., insurance card, watch, phone card and/or cell phone (limited service areas) & other personal needs.
  - Top sheet, lightweight blanket or throw & pillow, if you wish (bunks have fitted sheet & pillow).
  - Towel, washcloth, soap & other toiletry items
  - Swimsuit, beach towel, etc.
  - Camera, tech device, musical instruments, sports equipment, cards & other games, etc.
  - Pictures of yourself, family, community to share
  - Spending money (meals while traveling, snacks, souvenirs, event admissions, etc.).
  - Work gloves, goggles, dusk masks, rags, and any tools you might be able to use (program has a large variety of tools and some supplies).
  - You are responsible for your own things (DO NOT bring valuables). You are expected to show consideration for the group, our hosts & the people we will be serving.

**Cost**

Fees for volunteer groups are \$275.00 per person, per week. The fees are used to pay for materials for work projects, lodging, and related expenses. A tentative commitment is needed by mid-January (\$25.00 per person non-refundable registration fee is deposited toward the total amount due). St. Joseph donations, fundraising activities, and, if necessary, participants support this participation fee expense.

Gas money is needed for the trip & also for driving to and from work sites, errands, and for some events while in Clintwood (parish donations and/or drivers). Food expenses of approximately \$50.00 per person for the week is also required (provided by fundraisers and/or participants).

All participants are asked to take part in activities to help raise funds toward the program's expenses. Non-members of St. Joseph Church are asked to pay or raise the entire fee. Individual and/or business sponsorships are also encouraged.

**Insurance & Emergency Info.**

St. Joseph's requires that each participant submit an Agreement & Permission Form and Emergency Medical Form noting allergies, medications, etc., (for emergency medical treatment should that become necessary) no later than May 15th. The parish does not have insurance for volunteers. (bring medical cards for emergency purposes). First aid kits for each small work group are a good idea, as well.

**Binns-Counts Community Center**  
**124 Ritter Circle**  
**McClure, VA 24269**

The McClure River Valley Community Development Center (MRV CDC) is the parent organization for the Binns-Counts Community Center. A non-profit grassroots organization established in 1974, the center is committed to education, health care and decent housing for all. They are directed by a board of community people and staffed mainly by volunteers and work in partnership with colleges, community and church groups.

The Binns-Counts Center is in the Cumberland Plateau region of Appalachia, in Dickenson County, one of the coalfield counties of Virginia (in the western tip). Over one-third of the housing in Dickenson County is mobile homes or trailers. These are much less sturdy than traditional housing and require more upkeep. Added to this are aging wooden frame houses in which many are elderly live. For low-income residents, especially senior citizens, the maintenance costs for their homes are too much. This situation lead MRV CDC to begin housing repair at its startup and the program continues today.

**Binns-Counts: 276-807-7051**  
**Mary White: 276-835-8198**  
**binnscounts@yahoo.com**

*"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



**St. Joseph's**  
**APPALACHIAN**  
**EXPERIENCE**

**Offering Home Repairs to the Low-Income People of Appalachia**

**MCCLURE RIVER VALLEY CDC**  
**BINNS-COUNTS**  
**COMMUNITY CENTER'S**  
**HOUSING REPAIR PROGRAM**  
Mary White  
124 Ritter Cir.  
McClure, VA 24269  
Phone: 276-807-7051  
Email: binnscounts@yahoo.com

**HOW TO GET THERE**  
~ The Center is on St. Rt. 63 and is approximately 8 miles southeast from Clintwood, VA located in the western tip of Virginia (400 mi. trip from Mantua)  
~ I-775 to Charlestown, WV to 64. Then I19 to Pikesville, KY to 23S to St. Rt. 643 in Ervinton