



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 2006 began Saturday, June 24, with most of the group meeting at Bob Evans Restaurant in Streetsboro before heading down the highway. This year's participants included Bill Curtin, Mike, Barb & Paul Shilling, George, Kathi, James & Jeff Trares, Jessica Lovick, and Linda Dvorak. After a hearty breakfast, most caravanned the 400 mile trip south & arrived at the Dorothy Baker House about 3:30 p.m. (Shillings arrived Sunday). Sr. Jean welcomed the group & spoke of plans for the week's work. Saturday & Sunday's activities included settling in, planning & shopping for the week's meals, attending Mass, and visiting the home the group would be working on.

Although, this year's group was smaller than previous ones, the ten representatives of our parish along with program helpers Jarvis, Debbie, Brandi & Josh (grandson of one of the parishioners visiting from North Carolina) accomplished quite a bit of work on the home of Chris & Misty, a young couple with three children ages 9, 7 & 3. Living in the nearby town of Clincho, the family needed repairs made to a leaking roof

which caused damage to their kitchen ceiling & front porch. Working as a bus driver for the County and at Clintwood Lumber Co. during the summer, Chris and his family live in a small home tucked into the hillside that was two structures pieced together to make one small house.

Volunteers stripped the old roofing off, repaired damaged areas & re-shingled the roof. Work was also done on flashing around the chimney, some of the siding, fascia & eaves. The badly damaged kitchen ceiling & insulation was torn down, new joists & insulation were installed, drywall was hung, new trim was added & the entire room was painted. Lighting fixtures were updated & a window was installed to replace an unused door. The front porch roof was replaced & re-shingled, flashing was added where the porch roof met the house, and both the front & back porch ceilings received a coat of paint. A set of steps was also added to the back porch. Additional work will be needed on the siding, doors & windows which will be handled by groups coming later in the summer.

Bill Curtin also traveled to the town's Community Health Wagon to install dead bolts & locks to areas of the facility. He also added some much needed lighting to the stairway of the the Kennedy's home, St. Joseph parishioners.

Participating in this outreach effort since 1998, St. Joseph's volunteer group has never had any serious injuries or accidents—poison ivy, asthma attack & heat related problems are the only incidents. This year



was no exception. Aside from Bill receiving a couple of wasp stings & Jeff stepping on a nail (the wound barely broke the skin & a tetanus shot was given simple as a precaution), the group remains accident free.

A special & unique aspect of our parish's group this year was the volunteer work of Linda Dvorak who served as cook. Suffering from asthma, Linda is unable to go to the job sites so she offers her wonderful talents of baking & cooking. Instead of coming back after a long, hot day of work, having to clean up & then prepare supper, volunteers were treated to homemade, gourmet meals each evening (not to mention hearty breakfasts and very appetizing lunches to pack). Our group is the only group who gains weight during their 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.

After the day's work & supper on Wednesday, the group drove to the nearby home of 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. 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. In 2005, the volunteers heard a presentation about the organization & saw the beginnings of a learning and resource center, both for the local area and for the U.S. Movement. The group toured the now nearly complete center which includes living quarters for the couple (their current home on the property will be used for the organization's activities as well). For more information about the Fourth World Movement, please visit www.atd-4thworld.org.

On Thursday 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

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**ST. JOSEPH'S HOUSING
 REPAIR PROGRAM**

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

Learning About Appalachia

(Continued from page 1)
 this area because of the lack of any major interstate system in this remote area in the southwestern tip of Virginia. Even state capitol officials fail 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. St. Joseph's Housing Repair Program offers low-income people home repairs and engages the community in discussions around housing related issues and actions.

As part of this effort, members of the group also learned about the Appalachian area of our country by viewing a 3-hour documentary entitled "The Appalachians" that has been broadcast on PBS television stations. A local college student's film about the environmental concerns of clear cutting & strip mining was also watched. Several members also enjoyed the very popular movie "O, Brother Where Art Thou" (starring George Clooney) that features music of the region. Several of the songs from the movie are sung by Dr. Ralph Stanley who grew up in the Dickenson County area. The Ralph Stanley Museum and Traditional Mountain Music Center, which was opened in 2005, is located in Clintwood

(many members of last year's group visited this very nice museum).

As in years past, some of the group visited the people whose homes had been worked on the previous year. In 2005, Appalachian Experience worked on the home of Sr. Bernie Kenny who co-managed 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. Several members of this year's group stopped by her home in Clincho to visit & see how the repairs done to her kitchen, basement, shed, stairs & other outdoor areas had stood up.

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!

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

www.stjosephmantua.com

How Can I Get Involved?

Our parish is planning to send a group again next summer, the week of June 23rd through the 30th, 2007. 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 2007 or call Kathi at the Parish Office.

Financial backing for the program & patronage of fundraising efforts are also essential. Fees for volunteer groups are \$175.00 per person which covers lodging at the Dorothy Baker House, 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, dusk 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 needed).

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

