



The inmates are given a chance to express themselves during the rap sessions held at Attica.



Peter Rees (center) works with Bill Piper and Jay Coates in the Cephas Company remodeling shop.

Cephas-Attica

From 1

and there are always displeasures voiced, but the onlooker is witness to intelligent heated debate. It is this type of communication that has made Cephas the success it is.

"Cephas changed my outlook on life, my personality, and my attitude toward my family," one inmate said. "And things don't end when the session is over. If they do... well, then you might as well burn down the church."

"When the meeting is over, what we discuss does not remain in this room. It goes with me wherever I go in here," another said.

"It's important to inform or re-awaken those outside the group."

Steele and Siegel are not the only volunteers to go inside the walls of Attica. Many people, from businessmen to clergymen, have asked and been asked to attend several of the rap sessions held in small meeting rooms deep within

the massive prison walls.

Ray Datz of Rochester and his wife, Barbara, have been involved with Cephas-Attica for two years now and claim that it has strengthened their marriage, as well as their faith.

"Our life is in that room, as counselors," Datz said. "Through Cephas we've learned to communicate better as husband and wife. It makes us better listeners."

Once a month, Cephas

holds a meeting at Scottsville headquarters to discuss problems of some inmates and welcome new volunteers to their group.

Cephas-Attica has the backing of 17 area churches of various denominations and although they are of great assistance, the support wasn't enough to sustain Cephas' operation.

Steele and Siegel enlisted the help of Peter Rees, a woodworker, to form a remodeling business called

Cephas Company.

Rees also goes to Attica occasionally with Steele and Siegel, but the majority of his time is spent as foreman of the remodeling shop that employs ex-inmates that need jobs and wish to stay close to their friends and to Christ.

Cephas-Attica has built quite a fine reputation across the state. Its main claim to success is that it has been the only volunteer group in Attica to last through the 1971 riot.

"I came in here to see if a man was tired enough of Attica. Some like the conflict of this place because it's just like home," Steele said.

"There is intelligence in there," Siegel said pointing to the prison. "And we can't deny them the chance to express themselves."

"What people must realize is that a prisoner is just a person who made a wrong decision somewhere down the road... not an animal!"

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