

Mission

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On a typical Wednesday afternoon, one crew was sent to work on the interior of an addition to a log house, perched on a hilltop and surrounded by strip mines. Some of Frenchville's original settlers built the house on land acquired from a French nobleman in payment for a debt. The current owners, an elderly brother and sister descended from those settlers, were born in the house and hope to move back in when renovations are finished.

Several other crews smashed walls, carted out plaster fragments, painted and cleaned at two mission-owned houses in downtown Clearfield.

At Marian House, which offers shelter to as many as 100 battered or homeless women and children each year, volunteers were painting several front rooms that will serve as living and dining areas.

Mercy Mission, located next door, houses a second-hand clothing store. With volunteer help, the mission community is renovating the second floor of the building into apartments that will serve as "bridge" housing for families in transition.

At Life House, on the other side of town, students helped organize a yard sale. While neighbors browsed through mountains of books, dishes, clothing and furniture, other volunteers cleaned the house's gutters and raked the yard.

Life House was formerly an emergency men's shelter and the headquarters of the community's Right-to-Life ministry. Lacking a coordinator, both efforts have fallen by the wayside at present.

A final complement of volunteers traveled south to work at good Shepherd Mission in Coalport, which offers counseling, transportation, housing rehabilitation and assistance in dealing with social-service agencies.

Volunteers begin and end each day with community prayer or Mass at the mission's main site, located off a dirt road in the hills



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Pat Thomas sets the tables for the noon meal, as other volunteers prepare food in the kitchen area.

above the town of Frenchville. Individuals also spend one hour of the day in silence — a period designed for reflection and assimilation of the day's experiences.

Geneseo senior Mary Casey has gone back to Frenchville for three consecutive years because of the people she's served there. She has found that, whatever the condition of their health or their homes, the people of Appalachia are not easy to pity.

She recalled visiting Esther, an elderly woman who had been homebound for more than a dozen years. While Casey was there, Esther's 70-year-old neighbor, Bill, dropped in as he does every day. Esther and Bill aren't relatives, nor does Esther or anyone else pay Bill to help her. He cares for her because

they're neighbors.

"He thought it was so great that we came to visit her," she marveled, "but here he does it every day."

Another time, Casey was on a crew assigned to visit a woman described as "pregnant and depressed." The woman had asked for help in cleaning the trailer she shared with her unemployed husband and a child.

"When we got there, we were taken back a bit. It was so filthy," Casey said. "There was no hot water. Cloths were piled everywhere. We didn't know where to start."

They pitched in nonetheless, and before the day was over, the woman was putting up

curtains and making plans.

Beyond hard work and the headiness of helping others, students from Geneseo's Newman Community return each year because they gain insights about themselves and one another during their mission weeks.

"You come back at night, and everyone's done the same work you have," Casey said. "You talk, have a quiet hour, go to Mass. There's no TV or radio. You can learn a lot about yourself just from spending time like that."

Jennifer Falchi recalled that she left for Frenchville with just one friend. "Now these are 30 people I feel I've known all my life," she said. "That doesn't happen too often."

Date set for D/S/W conference

Applications and brochures are now available for the 12th annual Conference of Divorced, Separated, Widowed and Remarried Catholics. The conference will be held from May 15 to May 17 at the Hilton Hotel in Lake Placid.

The spiritual weekend — which is popular

for its workshops, dances, fine meals and opportunities to meet other divorced or widowed people — is open to those of all faiths.

To receive a conference brochure contact your local pastor or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Ken LaRue, Route 4, Potsdam, 13676.

D/S/W group plans social

The Separated, Divorced and Widowed groups of the Finger Lakes will sponsor a drop-in social on Saturday, April 25, beginning at 8 p.m. at the home of Art Mearns, 323 Lyons Road (Route 14), in Geneva.

The informal gathering is for people who recently became single again as a result of a

separation, divorce or death of a spouse. Participants are asked to bring beverages and snacks. Card and board games will be available.

For information and directions call Art, (315)789-6367; Patti, (716)526-5625; or Carl at the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, (315)789-2686.

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