

et cetera

Rural poor

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to cope with the after-effects of their terrible loss. But at times, those resources seem inadequate. "Maybe that's what we had to go through to get a better place," Rickey Holloway said. "But sometimes I ask the Lord, 'Why me?'"

Even in cases where the lack of affordable rental housing isn't life-threatening, it can have a killing effect on families less resilient than the Holloways.

Unable to locate an affordable apartment, Bridget Hilsinger — a co-worker of Rickey Holloway's — and Otis Rosser have been living separately for months. Hilsinger and the couple's three-year-old son are staying with her mother, while Rosser and their other son, age 6, live with his parents.

Last summer, the family moved into a six-room house on Buerman Road in Sodus. In lieu of rent, the landlord agreed to allow them to insulate the house over the course of a year. "It wasn't much more than a frame," Hilsinger recalled.

Several months later, although Hilsinger said she and Rosser had insulated all but the bathroom, the agreement fell apart and their landlord demanded \$200 a month in rent.

Hilsinger said she complied for the first month, but when no improvements were made to the house, she subsequently refused to pay. The landlord then not only evicted them, Hilsinger said, but "took us to court, claiming we owed \$1,000 or something."

Such landlord-tenant disputes contribute to the vicious cycle that keeps to a minimum the supply of housing for low-income residents of Wayne County and other rural regions. Because rental housing is scarce to begin with, prices are usually inflated. Once a family has



Bonnie Trafelet/Courier-Journal

Vivian Parish's three-room house has no plumbing, insulation, or heat aside from a kerosene heater and gas stove.

moved in, they have little incentive to continue paying rent they can ill-afford for housing that may be substandard and — as in the case of the Holloways' wooden-frame trailer — downright dangerous.

"The landlords are part of it too, — they won't fix these places," Holloway said. "They put off fixing things until finally, when they come out, you're floating in water up to your neck, you're about to get electrocuted or you're freezing to death."

Even responsible landlords, in turn, become reluctant to accept tenants for fear that they will refuse to pay rent or will damage the property.

The Holloways should be spared yet another

search for an accommodating landlord. By this October, they hope to build a new home on a half-acre of land off of Pound Road with financing from CASH and the Farmer's Home Administration.

Meanwhile, Rickey Holloway is taking part in the search for a broader solution to Wayne

County's housing shortage by serving on the board of Habitat for Humanity of Wayne County — a newly established chapter of the Georgia-based organization that enlists volunteer help and donations to help low-income people build or improve their homes. "I don't want to see what happened to us happen to somebody else," Holloway said.

Habitat has already donations of property in the Wayne County village of North Rose. Habitat board president Clinton McCoy said he hopes to have a foundation in "by the time the snow flies, so that we can begin building a house in the spring."

In the meantime, McCoy said, the Habitat chapter is seeking a volunteer with extensive construction experience to supervise volunteer workers on the project.

The organization is also enlisting the help of area churches to raise funds for future building projects. Several churches — including St. Mary's — have agreed to turn junk into cash by collecting recyclable material, selling it to a Macedon firm, then donating the proceeds to Habitat.

McCoy credits the Holloway family's story with demonstrating to church communities the urgency of the housing problem in Wayne County. "The need is really great — Rickey's family is an example of how great," McCoy explained. "He paid more in rent (for the trailer destroyed in last year's fire) than I pay for my mortgage each month. If there was not the need, that kind of price could not be gotten."

Marriage Encounter weekend planned for retreat house

World Wide Marriage Encounter is sponsoring a weekend experience for all married couples August 12-14 at the Notre Dame Retreat House, Foster Road, Canandaigua.

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**General**

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