

## Learning Generosity

Generosity is one of the primary Judeo-Christian virtues: Care for “widows and orphans”, Do for the “least of these”, “God loves a cheerful giver”. Yet, it seems at times that selfishness is natural and generosity must be learned. Youth from the Swansboro United Methodist Church had an opportunity to learn generosity during a mission venture to Mullens, Wyoming County, West Virginia as part of the Appalachia Service Project. Each summer since 1969, ASP has brought youth work teams from all over the country to perform home repairs for people in need in the impoverished Appalachia region. In all, about 14,000 people will work on 450 homes in 28 counties this year. Two college students Jordan Barham (Swansboro and UNC-CH) and Jolean Brann (Cedar Point and Meredith), who had been on several of the church’s eight prior ASP missions, are now heading up ASP groups all summer in Martin County KY and Morgan County TN. This year’s 18 youth and 12 adults from Swansboro were joined in West Virginia by a group of 5 from West Hartford, CT and a group of over 40 from Cary, NC all living at the Mullens Middle School for the week.

The Mullens area has had its share of problems in recent times. Severe flooding engulfed the town in July 2001 and the town has worked hard to rebuild. Since that time there has been a 10% loss in jobs and population. While coal mining is still the major industry, mine safety and mountain top removal are critical and visible economic and environmental issues. In April 2010, 29 miners were killed in a mine explosion in neighboring Raleigh County. As one of the SUMC teams was working on a home, the ex-husband of the homeowner was brought home from his mining job with leg injuries from a falling rock in the Itmann mine four miles away. Five miners had been killed in the Itmann mine in an explosion in 1972. The remaining population of Wyoming County now has a disability rate of over 30% and housing values are 40% of the national average. “The amazing thing to me is the spirit of the people,” says Roger Fulp one of the work team leaders from Cape Carteret, “Despite their circumstances, the people have a peace and joy about them and the children are playful and enjoying life.”

Roger along with Tom Scholl, Stella, and Roy Staebler, Emerald Isle, demonstrated their generosity by sacrificing a week of work and income in their construction businesses to use their skills repairing homes and teaching youth. Bill Eubanks and Clyde Keagy, both of Swansboro, also came out of 'retirement' to lead teams. "These leaders, along with our other adults, not only taught our youth how to use tools and do extensive home repairs, but they have taught our youth about caring for others while having a good time doing it," says Dave Johnson who organized the group. "I'd say the key message is that generosity is born out of selfless giving, not abundance. It's not just money. It's also about selflessly giving of your time to play with the children and listen to the families' story and to meet new friends from around the country who shared experiences that you will look back on throughout your life."

The trip was made possible by the generosity of church members and its men's and women's groups who have become 'stockholders' in the effort by purchasing 'shares' in the project. Community support has also been generous as the Swansboro Shrine Club and the Bogue House Restaurant held a Fish Fry to raise funds for this trip and for the church's scout troop.

At the close of the week Jesse Williams, a rising Swansboro High senior commented, "It really felt good to be able to help people who really needed it; I don't seem to be able to do that very often at home." That is the spirit of generosity.

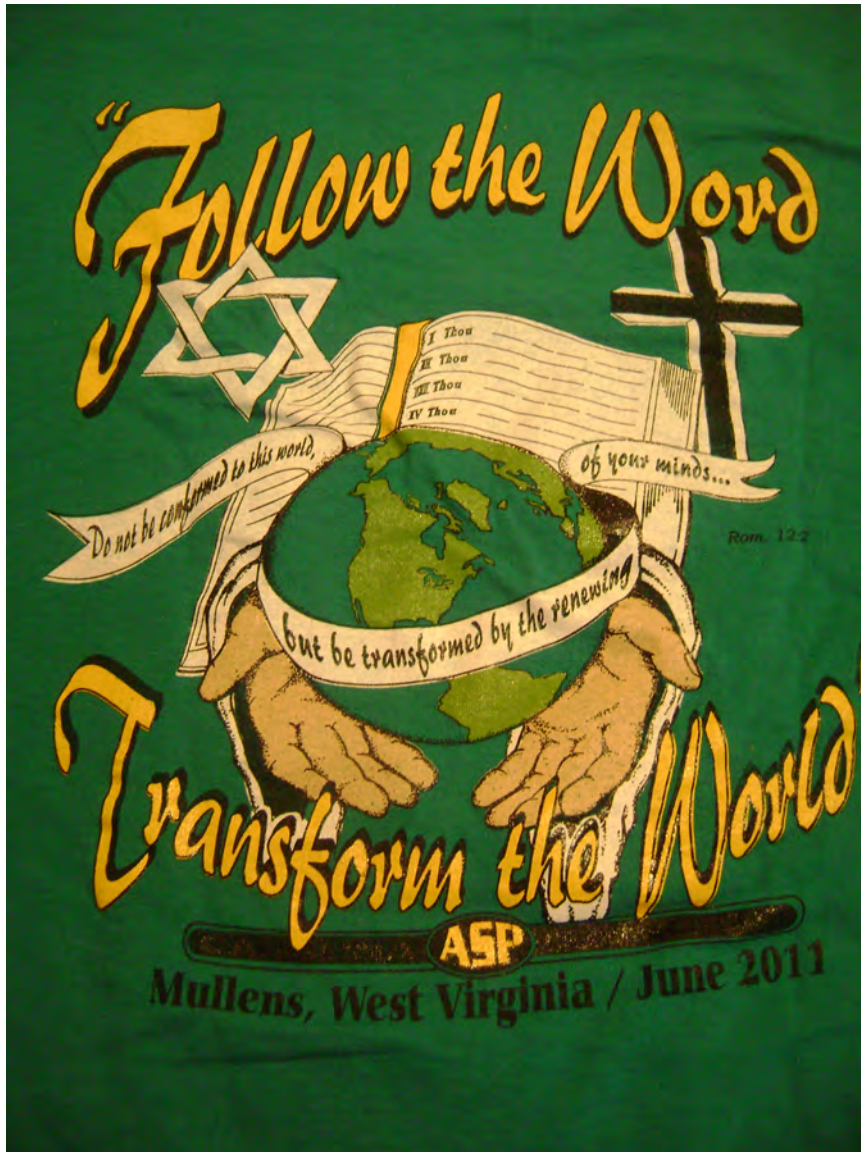


Team Commissioning Service Picture - SUMC 6/18/11

Front: Dave Johnson, Lynn Rouse, Kristin Baker, Kirk McIntosh, Elli Scholl,  
Emily Maxwell, Lane Harris, Marcie Briley, Susan Fulp

2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Kerry Baker, Rachel Woodul, Jessica Nightingale, Sarah Simpson,  
Hannah Simpson, Kelsie Maxwell, Kathy Woodul, Ruby Williams

Back Rows: Rian Henriksen, Bill Eubanks, Linda Johnson, Caleb Fulp, Roy  
Staebler, Kaysey Raper, Ryan Staebler, Gracie Glover, Justin Nightingale,  
Jake Norris, Jesse Williams, Tom Scholl, Clyde Keagy, Roger Fulp



Picture of T-Shirt Back:

Tom Crawford generously created a t-shirt for the team that depicts this year's theme "Follow the Word – Transform the World" and captures the teamwork of the Swansboro team working with a Jewish group from Connecticut.

- Bill Eubank's Team built front and rear access decks for a single mother who acquired a mobile home recently moved to the site...hope to get running water and septic to the home by the end of the summer
- Clyde Keagy's Team added foundation support and built an access deck for a father of two, recently unemployed whose wife is in jail. They also put on fascia and gutters on another home that had a deck added the prior week..
- Roger Fulp's Team removed, repaired and covered a roof including removal of a chimney for a single mother with two young boys.

- Roy Staebler's Team partitioned a room for a baby in a four generational family including framing, sheetrock, painting and curtains. They also put a new floor in a bathroom and plumbed the fixtures and repaired and 'popcorned' a ceiling.

- Tom Scholl's Team removed fire damage, replaced structural supports and added a door and windows for a single mother with three children who also cares for extended family.

Some of the other pictures also show the family picnic (all families invited), "Tattoo Tuesday", and the Friday night ice cream eating contest (three gutter troughs emptied by girls, boys and adults...girls won in an eat-off)...