



Photography by Abe McIntyre

Appalachia Service Projects seeks adult volunteers to help during non-summer months

Winter is a cruel season in Central Appalachia—the season when need for emergency home repair is most sorely felt, the season when Appalachia Service Project most sorely needs volunteers to help Central Appalachian families in need.

Perhaps best known as a summer youth program, Appalachia Service Project (ASP) is a Christian ministry, open to people of all ages—both volunteers and families in need—that addresses Central Appalachian housing needs year-round. ASP was founded in 1969 by Methodist pastor Glenn “Tex” Evans as a summer outreach through which youth might help people in need. Now, in addition to this summer outreach, ASP recruits volunteers from college-age to retirees to serve during non-summer months. Bases of operation for these volunteers are ASP Housing Services Centers, the permanent facilities ASP now operates year-round due to the considerable needs in these areas, which are far from seasonal.

The continuing reality of this region’s poverty—its causes and the almost insurmountable needs resulting from it—is difficult to grasp from outside the region. It is almost unthinkable that there is what amounts to a Third World country here within the United States. Yet the reality in Central Appalachia—where ASP works—is very similar to that found in the Third World.

“The reality of this poverty took some time to sink in,” admits the Reverend Christopher T. Holmes, Annapolis District Superintendent in the Baltimore/Washington DC Conference of the United Methodist Church. A former ASP Summer Staffer and long-time ASP volunteer, Holmes remembers all too well the jolting experience that finally brought this reality home to him.

“Although I met many wonderful people while on ASP Summer Staff, poverty’s suffering was most keenly brought home to me

by two brothers who approached us about winterizing their home too late one summer for us to do anything about their request,” he remembers. The following summer, Holmes returned to ASP Summer Staff service, remembering this need left behind and intending to address it first thing.

Even after all these years, Holmes cannot share this experience without shuddering. “We looked for these brothers only to learn that they’d frozen to death that winter,” he says sadly. “Sometimes we realize too late that we don’t have everything figured out.”

Truly, there is much yet to be figured out about meeting Central Appalachian housing needs. In the meantime, ASP continues to provide free repairs, making homes warmer, safer, and drier for families in need. Volunteers who come to serve often deal with life-saving, emergency home repairs without realizing the urgency of those repairs—similar to Holmes’ experience years ago.

As the ASP summer program grew, the community around Jonesville, Virginia, invited ASP to work there full-time, year-round. ASP accepted this invitation, and the first ASP Housing Services Center was established there. Another soon followed in Chavies, Kentucky. These no-frills lodges provide shelter for adult volunteers who realize that needs in these areas are ever-present and perhaps felt most keenly through the winter. Volunteers are fed at these centers, sleep in bunk beds there, and participate in staff-led programs to help them process their experiences.

Now ASP invites Volunteers in Mission teams to come and serve this winter at one of these Housing Services Centers. During non-summer months, ASP offers volunteers much more flexibility in scheduling than is possible during the high-volume summer months. “Non-summer volunteers may come for a week of service—just like summer volunteers do,” says Carolyn Bailey, director of volunteers. “However they may also come for two weeks, a weekend or long weekend, over fall break—for whatever time they can make available to serve. Groups or individuals are welcome, and our fees adjust to accommodate numbers and time available.”

Applications for non-summer service are posted on ASP’s website www.asphome.org or may be requested through the mail from cbailey@asphome.org or Volunteer Department, Appalachia Service Project, 4523 Bristol Highway, Johnson City, TN 37601. Call Bailey at 423-854-8800, ext. 208, with questions or for additional information. Now is the time to arrange for ASP service this winter in Central Appalachia.

Volunteers Needed for UMVIM Team Set To Serve at ASP in December 2005

Appalachia Service Project (ASP) and the Southeastern Jurisdiction office of UMVIM jointly announce that an UMVIM team is forming to serve at ASP during the month of December 2005—specific dates to be set in the near future.

Landon Taylor, SEJ UMVIM communications specialist and an experienced UMVIM team leader, will lead this team, and volunteers are needed now. Please contact Landon immediately to express initial interest and to be added to the update list for details as plans become more defined. Landon may be reached at Landon_Taylor@umvim.org or via phone at 404-377-7424.



Top

Snow cover fails to slow the emergency home repair progress for this adult work crew. As can be seen from the photo, work is progressing outdoors and indoors.



Center

Adult ASP volunteers find reason to smile even in winter on a rooftop in Central Appalachia.

Bottom

Adult volunteers pause to become part of the Appalachian scenery while in mission a long way from their home church, First United Methodist, Baton Rouge, LA.



photography by ASP staff