

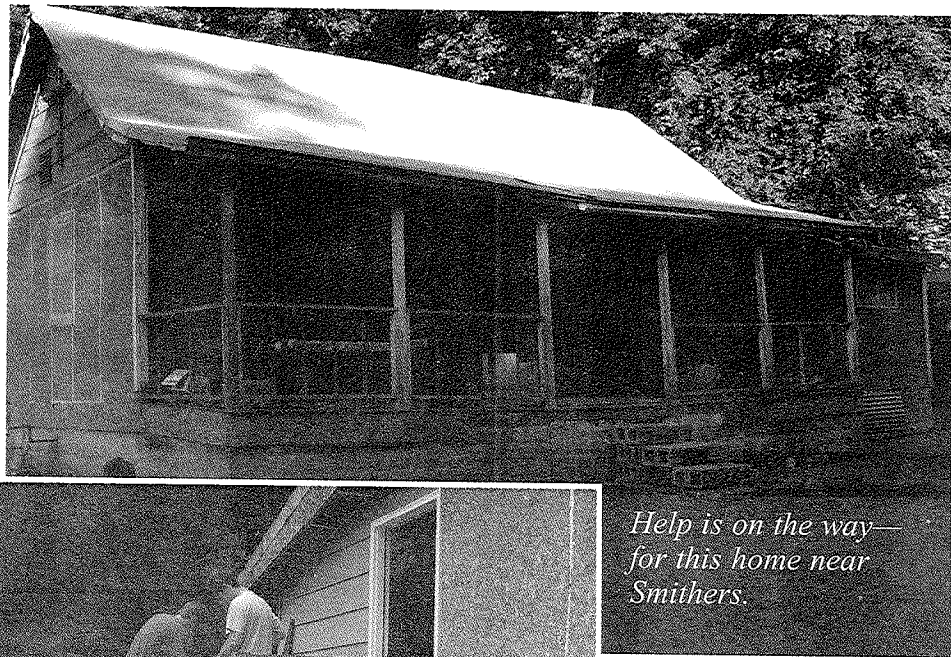


The New Jersey Market

BY NANCIE A. BALUN-BOUGHTON, MIRM, CSP

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION

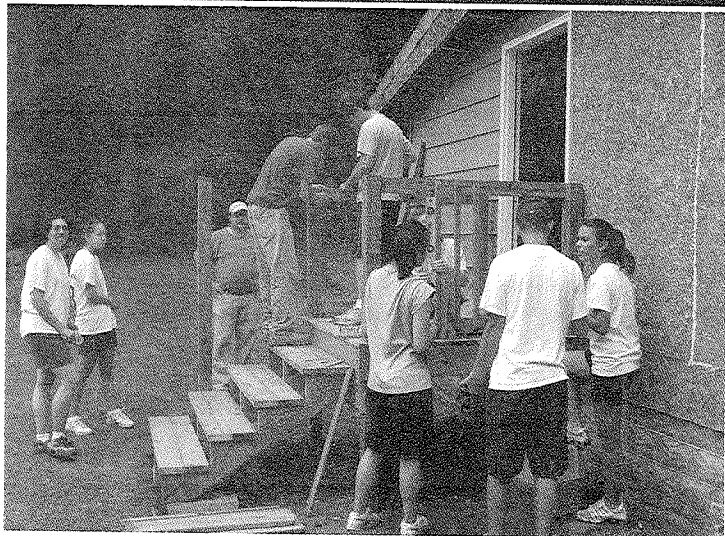
Fun repairing and building needy family's homes



*Help is on the way—
for this home near
Smithers.*

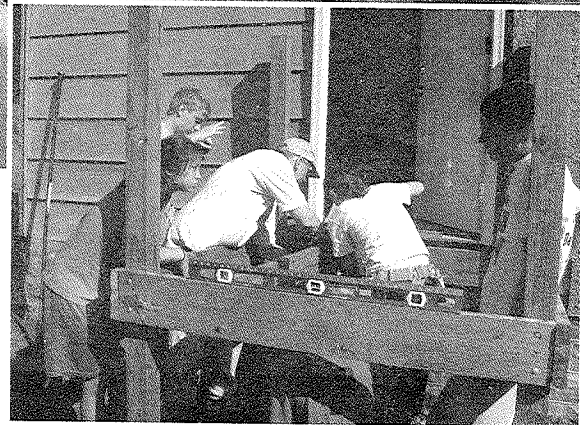


*Above right: Crew 13
Michelle Kwak,
Stephanie Ramdat, Alex
and Jim Boughton, Rita
Fredericksen and Phil Batterson*



Right: constructing new deck

*Left: Crew 13 gets help on the last day of
deck construction*



So how did you spend your summer vacation? Did you by chance go to the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia where some of the poorest people live? I didn't think so. My son and husband did. They spent five grueling days working with 398 other volunteers who converged on Smithers, West Virginia to help rebuild and repair the homes of over 60 families in and around Smithers as part of an Appalachian service project facilitated by the Group Workcamps Foundation based in Loveland, Colorado.

If you have never donated your time and talents to help needy homeowners, consider taking your building skills and giving back to those less fortunate, for you will surely never forget how good it can feel to volunteer.

"I had never been to a tiny southern coal mining town before," said 15-year-old Alex Boughton. "When we arrived with 400 volunteers, we com-

prised almost half the town's population, since Smithers only has about 900 residents. The medium income is \$20,000 and 20% of the residents live below the poverty line. I had never seen such poverty before – houses that look like shacks and garages made from metal sheets," continues Alex.

"I was happy to help my son in his journey to understand how important it is to perform civic work for others," commented Jim Boughton. "Community service is a great way to foster in our children a life-long desire to learn and help those around them. I, like many people I know, help a lot of people because it makes us feel good. But this experience was so vastly different because these people are really so less fortunate than most."

Group Works provided pre-training for all the volunteers, from learning how to use a hammer to painting. Generally, there were four high school students to every two adults, and each group

was responsible for their assigned home renovation. The more building experience you had, the more difficult your assigned job. The entire group of volunteers was housed in the town's school, and meals and showers were included. Additionally, everyone had to donate and raise the necessary money to pay for transportation, food and material expenses.

For Jim and Alex's team, members were responsible for the replacement of a front door, a side window and the building of a 5' x 5' deck. Every day they worked from 9am to 3pm. If they thought they were going to fall behind during their five-day work stay, back-up help was always available.

"I don't know how, but I got assigned some tasks that I was unable to do, but there was always someone to guide me at the end of the day before we started out the next morning," said Jim.

"My dad was really amazing, he rose to the top and kept his

cool with all of us teenagers. I didn't know how to build a deck, but I do now. I definitely want to do this again next year," exclaimed Alex.

For the families on the receiving end, they too wanted to give back to the 400 volunteers. "The husband and wife we helped had little resources, but they thanked us by providing a big southern-style lunch with homemade baked beans and biscuits, pork ribs, corn-on-the-cob and fried chicken. Now that's true southern hospitality; it was amazing," exclaimed Jim.

If you would like to get involved next summer by working with one community or national organization to impact positive change, contact GroupWorkcamps.com or inquire at your house of worship as often they partner with national volunteer organizations, including Habitat for Humanity. ■