

Hammerin' in the Hills

The Mission Team left on Sunday, June 6, 2010, at 1:00pm on our 6-½ hour drive to Hazard, KY. Kim Albert, Robert Guthrie, Mike Koch, Russell Lee, Carl and Jacquelyn McAbee, and John Mele made up the team for this trip.

We arrived safely at First Presbyterian Church of Hazard and were given lodging in the newer of two “mission cottages” located right next to the church. Before bed we reviewed information about the two jobs we would undertake. One was removing and replacing underpinning and a front deck on a mobile home belonging to an elderly woman who was afraid to step out of her door because of so many rotten places in the porch. The other was building a brand new house from the foundation up for a man who was in and out of work and just wanted a home for his little girl. After months of planning we were set to begin the next morning.

Early Monday morning Team I – Mike, Robert, and Kim – headed out to work on the underpinning and deck removal and replacement job; Team II – Russell, John, Carl and Jacquelyn – left for the new home construction site. Team I accomplished the entire demo before lunch, replaced ¼ of the underpinning, and rebuilt the deck floor by day’s end. Team II did the entire sub-floor and had one exterior wall standing by quitting time. They lost count of the number of nails they had driven at somewhere upward of 6,000. We were definitely “Hammerin’ in the Hills!”

On Tuesday Team II finished the remaining exterior walls of the new house, and appeared to put Team I to shame who only finished steps and handrail for the deck. But the lead carpenters on both sites remarked at how impressed they were at the amount of work our folks were able to accomplish. Even while taking a sick day at the cottage, Carl replaced the leaky bathroom faucet and did some caulking around the tub.

The McAbees decided that they needed to get Carl home to medical care by his regular doctors so they headed home early Wednesday, and the rest of us hated to lose part of our team who has worked together so closely in this service that we love. Team II arrived on the job and had hammered 2 nails when it began raining. The carpenters called off work for the day, so we decided to use our time doing things to improve the Mission Cottage. We added hooks over the doors for hanging clothes and towels, a shower caddy, a microwave and toaster, and did what turned out to be extensive work on some of the doors that wouldn’t close properly. Team I’s lead carpenters were more persevering as they dodged the rain drops and actually put in a full day’s work trying to complete the replacement of the underpinning. After dinner some took a walk downtown. References to “Black Gold” were everywhere – coal is still VERY important here. Our carpenters told us that approximately 90% of the population makes their living in the coal mines. They also told us stories about what it’s like to work as a miner – scary stuff.

After the rain delay, Team II returned to hammering on Thursday and built all the interior walls for the house, and were able to get everything ready for roof trusses the next day. Team I finished the tedious job of underpinning the trailer, and completed the new deck. They went the extra mile by clearing a lot of debris from under the trailer, tidying up the wires from the satellite dish, and relocating stepping stones so that they made a nice path from the new deck to the parking area.

For our final day, the two work teams came together on the new home construction site. The big event of the day was setting the roof trusses. It was a slow but interesting process, and it was mid-afternoon before they were finally all in place. A few other odd jobs, and by day’s end we left our “new” house all ready for a youth team next week to finish it up with sheeting and shingles.

The tools were packed away. Another Mission Trip completed. The Upper Room devotion for our first day of work set the tone for the week. Entitled Immeasurable Compassion, it said that just as the needy, alone, and those without help depend on others [like us] to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, we are all spiritually dependent on God and desperately in need of our Savior to do what we cannot do for ourselves.