



# Helping HEART's and Hands

Catholic work camp brings youths together for community service.  
By Jennifer Moore - Carolina Morning News - 07/07/2004

Hundreds of Catholic teens descended on the Lowcountry on Sunday, traveling from Illinois, Indiana, Texas, Florida and Georgia to sleep on the floors of H.E. McCracken Middle School.

They came in vans and buses, wearing shirts with slogans, such as "Live in His world, pray in ours," "When you pray, move your feet," and "Serving others, one week at a time."

Their objective? To volunteer their time doing work for elderly and disabled Lowcountry residents.

The teens are all part of Catholic HEART (Helping Everyone Attain Repairs Today) Work Camp, a national program that brings young people together to work and perform minor home repairs, as well as grow in their faith.

From their base at H.E. McCracken Middle School, the 375 campers will work on 55 projects in Beaufort and Jasper counties, chosen by United Way of Beaufort County.

The campers will work from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. today through Thursday, then take time to enjoy the Lowcountry on Friday.

Work projects include such things as painting, yard work, cleaning and minor exterior repairs, said Maggie McGowan, camp director. Some groups will work with Sun City woodworkers for larger projects.

Jackie Holmes, 17, of Atlanta's Transfiguration Catholic Church, said this is her fifth Catholic HEART Work Camp trip. She will travel to Mobile, Ala., for another project next week.

"It's the most amazing week of my life," Holmes said.

One of the most emotional experiences is at the end of the week, she said, when the residents who had work done to their homes come to thank the campers.

Meghan Kanzler, 15, also from Atlanta, said this is her first trip but she is looking forward to seeing the reactions on people's faces when the work is done.

Michael Finnegan, 18, agreed.

"Coming from a family where we can always get the things we need and want, it is neat to help others and see the smile on their faces," he said.

Barbara Kanzler, a group leader with the Atlanta group, said when the church began attending the work camp six years ago, there were only 15 participants. This year, she said, there were 15 vans full of teens.

"The kids love it," she said. "They give up a week of their summer to do it."

This is the sixth year Catholic HEART Work Camp has come to the Lowcountry, said Bethany Marcinkowski, director of resource services for the local United Way.

"It is such a pleasure to see the spirit of this group," she said. "It is so genuine and real."

Reporter Jennifer Moore can be reached at 837-5255, ext. 122, or [Jennifer.e.moore@Lowcountrynow.com](mailto:Jennifer.e.moore@Lowcountrynow.com)