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Student Volunteers Repair Local Homes



Jul 2 2018 /

[Terry Rogers](#)

by Terry Rogers



Jerry Guyer, a former dispatcher for the Milford Police Department, says that since he is totally disabled, he is unable to perform routine maintenance on his home in Ellendale. Thanks to a group of young people from Catholic Heart Work Camp, there are a few maintenance tasks he no longer has to worry about.

“These kids have been a true blessing for me,” Guyer said. “As someone who is totally disabled, I just can’t do all the little things I used to be able to do. Last year, a group from this organization came and painted the house and my handicap ramp. They are replacing a few boards as well as painting my shed and the propane enclosure. They are really hardworking kids and I am so blessed to have them do this work for me.”

Guyer learned about the organization through his social worker. Many of the students who work in the program are out of St. Thomas More in Dover, but the group consists of young people all over the East coast, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

“I have been doing this for seven years,” Mark DeSomma, a chaperone for one of the crews, said. My wife volunteered first and, because my kids were doing it, I got involved as well. All five of my kids have gone through the program. My youngest will finish his last year in the program this year because he is a senior in high school. We have performed many different activities. One year we joined up with Habitat for Humanity and worked on homes with them. We’ve painted a Catholic school, painted, cleaned and done routine maintenance on many residential buildings. We’ve built decks and enclosures for people.”



Each camp has about 220 kids who work from Delaware City south helping at food banks, working on the homes of the disabled, daycares and in many other capacities. Each week, a new group of students is assigned to different areas. DeSomma said that the youth work for four days, sometimes on multiple projects like the team he was working with and others on one project for the entire four days.

“My friend’s brother did this one year,” Haleigh Merriman, 16, of Wall, New Jersey, said. “When my friend decided to sign up and do it, she asked me to come with her so I signed up. One year, I was at a camp in Boston with little kids, working as a sort of camp counselor. Last year, I was in Roanoke where I built a deck for an elderly man in a wheelchair. I like seeing people’s reaction when we do something good for them. It makes me want to do more of this kind of thing at home to keep spreading good feelings.”

This was the first year that Haley D’Ambrosio, 15, also of Wall, New Jersey, worked with the organization. The first two days of the week, she painted the bedroom of a disabled person and helped cut down trees. She joined because she likes helping people and feels that this type of service spreads love and kindness.

“This is my second year,” Sam Carestrano, 14, of Richmond, Virginia, said. “I’ve done a lot of different things, like ripping apart a deck, helping to modify and paint a bathroom. It makes me feel good about myself because I know I am helping someone who needs my help. Not only that, I get to hang out with my friends while I am doing it, so it is a win-win for me.” Patrick Coens, 15, also of Richmond, said he has been working with the organization for three years, doing things like weeding, cleaning gravestones and adding accessible options to homes for the elderly. He also says he likes the good feeling he gets by helping people.

Catholic Heart Work Camp began in 1993 in Orlando, Florida, with 100 participants. Today, more than 13,000 will provide assistance throughout the summer. The goal of the organization is to provide youth groups, teens and adult leaders the opportunity for service and leadership. Although the young people age out after high school, once they reach 22, they can become chaperones. DeSomma said that one of the young women who was chaperoning that week had been a student in the program as well.

More information on the Catholic Heart Work Camp can be found on their website at www.heartworkcamp.com.



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