



Perinton Presbyterian Church

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Media Contact:

Steven Becker, Pastor

Perinton Presbyterian Youth Spend Winter Break Helping Others

Rotted floorboards sent a woman to the hospital with a leg injury in rural Kentucky. Those same floorboards prevented her from returning to her home - until a group of teenagers and adults from Perinton Presbyterian Church stepped in to help repair them.

The woman is a resident of the poverty-stricken Appalachian area around Red Bird Mission, a nonprofit agency providing educational, health, and community outreach ministries to Beverly, a southeastern Kentucky community, since 1921. When the local hospital refused to release the woman until her home was deemed safe, Perinton Presbyterian Church youth group and adult advisers, in conjunction with Red Bird Mission, arranged for repairs that enabled her to go home. In addition, the youth group helped refurbish cabins, deliver food, and complete basic repairs for other area residents and the Red Bird Mission campus itself, which consists of dormitories and a boarding school for impoverished children.

Bob Wallance, one of the group's adult advisers, points up the differences between urban and rural poverty. In urban poverty, he says, "You have resources you can turn to, but in such a rural area, people are largely on their own." Even if such resources were available, "the public transportation to get to them would in itself be a luxury." Pastor Steve Becker agrees, noting that "It is a wonderful opportunity for our youths to better understand the similarities and differences that come from living in different parts of the country."

This is not the first time the young people of Perinton Presbyterian Church have stepped into an unfamiliar area of need. Previous mission trips have included such destinations as New Orleans, North Carolina, Florida, West Virginia and Virginia as well as the bigger metropolises of Washington D.C., Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Staten Island and a local project in downtown Rochester. This broad spectrum of need is entirely in keeping with the church's mission. "From a faith perspective," Becker notes, "we're taught to love all people. These trips give us a broader perspective of what life is, how people experience it, and what it means to love people whose life context is totally different from ours."

Young people on the trip, who represented seven area schools - Bloomfield, Fairport, Harley, PalMac, Penfield, Pittsford, and Victor - agree. Daniel Becker, a senior at Fairport High School, says, "We saw how simple things like distributing food were changing the lives of the community." Nick Lowry, a Fairport High tenth grader, said he understood the feeling that comes from "not really working for myself but for other people. It's a sacrificial form of love." Johanna Perrin School eighth grader Cody McDaniel, on his first work camp trip, enjoyed the demolition aspects of the projects, "removing old worn out bunk beds to make room for new ones." Carly Sanford, a PalMac ninth grader, called the work camp a "a warming experience."

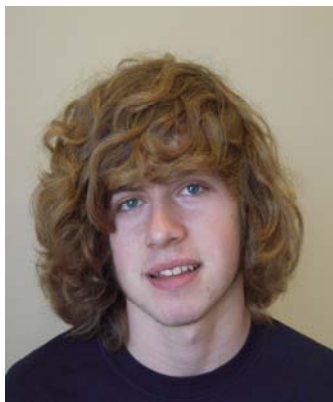
Pastor Steve Becker points out the benefits of such a trip for the young people themselves: "It helps them connect their faith in God in a practical way with their gifts and abilities and with the needs faced by many people each day." In addition, he says, they develop "an understanding of how they can serve and the joy of doing so" while building "healthy group dynamics by working together and operating in teams." The end result is a growth in "connection with each other and connection with God," Becker says.

The youth group of Perinton Presbyterian Church will be sharing their experiences at the Red Bird Mission with a slide show during the church's Sunday services, 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., on March 14th at 6511 Pittsford-Palmyra Road in Perinton. The public is welcome.

Despite the efforts of Perinton Presbyterian's youth, challenges remain for the Red Bird Mission and the isolated, distressed area it serves. Chronic poverty, lack of jobs, poor housing, and rugged, mountainous terrain provide obstacles to even a basic quality of life. Perinton Presbyterian Church youth group's mission is to try to make a difference, in Red Bird and other places, one floorboard at a time.



Cody McDaniel
Johanna Perrin Grade 8



Nick Lowry
Fairport HS Grade 10



Daniel Becker
Fairport HS Grade 12



Carly Sanford
PalMac Grade 9



Bob Wallance
PPC Youth Group Advisor



Steve Becker
PPC Pastor