

RESTORING HOPE

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The Return of Youth Camp!

by Nina Taylor



Generosity and volunteerism are the heartbeat of Good Neighbors. We can do all we do because individuals, churches, businesses, and foundations donate financially to fund the work. And we can stretch those dollars further by using volunteer labor to help get some of the work done. In 2020, Covid greatly disrupted our volunteer operations, cancelling our annual youth work camp as well as our corporate work

weeks. The 518 volunteers we had in 2019 donated 8,381 hours, but in 2020 that number sank to 178 volunteers giving 2,188 hours. The miracle was that we did more repairs in 2020 than any other year. Nevertheless, we were thrilled to be able to run our youth work camp once again this summer.

In July, youth from Episcopal Church of the Advent, Grace Fellowship Church, Heritage Presbyterian Church, and Presbyterian Church of Kennett Square worked on homes in West Grove, PA, New Castle, DE, and Wilmington, DE. Our camp volunteers helped to rebuild an unsafe deck for one homeowner, replaced siding for another, and two homeowners each had their siding, roof, and windows replaced with



the help of our youth camp volunteers. They got a lot of work done!

In the process of working, the youth learn home repair skills, teamwork, service, and compassion. Our mission is to restore hope and dignity to low-income homeowners by repairing their homes. When youth volunteer with our work camps, we hope it lights a fire in them to continue to serve their communities throughout their lives, delivering hope to those in need.

When asked what her experience with Good Neighbors had been like, one homeowner said, "It's been awesome. I appreciate the work Good Neighbors has done on my home as well as other people's homes. I feel very special. I'm happy. It's like having a brand-new home." This is the joy and hope that acts of service can deliver to others, and being a part of that is a powerful experience for our youth volunteers. As one of our campers said, "Community isn't just your neighbors. It's everyone around you, and you can always go out of your way to help them."



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Dear friends,

It is said that we cannot appreciate something until it is taken away. The pandemic prevented a critical component of our ministry last summer, and we missed the youthful energy and the community impact of youth camp.

This summer we had two youth camps in July with 45 students from five churches. It made me realize teens are our "secret weapon" because their enthusiasm to learn, work, and to serve inspires and encourages us. Despite the heat, they showed up and worked hard each day-with smiles and the realization that they are part of something larger than themselves, namely improving the lives of our needy neighbors in New Castle and Chester counties.

It gets better. Their testimonies (at the Closing Program) were full of appreciation for what they had (gratitude), the privilege of serving (stewardship), the joy of working together for a common purpose (teamwork), inspiration from our biblical teaching (discipleship), and the acquisition of new skills (training). All these blessings occurred in five days!

We cannot wait to see many of them again on another workday or youth camp. Their contribution gives us hope for this next generation of leaders who will take our place in the leadership of ministries like Good Neighbors!

Harold Naylor, Executive Director

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