



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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REACH PROGRAM RETURNS TO FAYETTE COUNTY

Uniontown, PA – A national nonprofit hopes to make a difference in Fayette County residents' lives this summer.

REACH Ministries, an interdenominational, Colorado-based organization, has brought hundreds of youth volunteers, ages 12 to 20, to the county to complete rehabilitation, construction and repair projects on homes in low-income communities.

Also known as REACH Workcamps or REACH Mission Trips, the service organization was founded in 1992 by Mike Jones. Since then, more than 53,000 youth volunteers have attended work programs in nearly 20 states and Mexico.

Its mission is to impact homeowners, communities and students by working with local churches and agencies to complete projects that build participants' self-esteem, encourage spiritual growth and help them understand their role in combating poverty and blight.

The visit marks the third time the group, which will be tackling projects at various Uniontown residences throughout June, has visited Fayette County.

Most recently, REACH brought more than 700 volunteers, including some Fayette County residents, to Brownsville in 2017, using the Brownsville Area School District as its home base. Their projects included painting, roofing, drywall, handicap-accessible ramp construction and more - all at no cost to the homeowners.

Fayette County Commissioner Chairman Vince Vicites said he enjoys seeing young people volunteer their time to improve Fayette, as some of them are our future leaders.

"It's fantastic to see this young group of people work so hard, and it's wonderful they keep coming back," Vicites said. "I want to thank REACH for all their help and for choosing Fayette County."

Commissioner Dave Lohr echoed Vicites' sentiments, offering REACH his "full support" of all the work they do.

"Fayette County has been blessed by this amazing organization," Lohr said. "I cannot emphasize enough my gratitude to REACH for coming to Fayette County again this summer."

Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink said it's "wonderful" to have youths volunteer, "as it helps prepare them for adulthood, while helping those in need."

Lohr said REACH's previous visit was extremely impactful for one homeowner whose annual income was less than \$15,000. In desperate need of a new roof, he received a quote of more than \$19,000 for the project.

"Clearly, this was not a project that the homeowner could afford," Lohr said. "REACH donated the time and materials to replace the roof at no cost to the homeowner. That's significant."

During each camp session, Fridays are called "Miracle Fridays," as all projects are completed by week's end.

"Some of the projects really do come down to the wire," Lohr said. "That's where teamwork and a spirit of camaraderie really come in, as teams that have already completed their projects - rather than sitting back and relaxing - step up to the plate and pitch in to get projects done at other sites."

REACH programs impact communities at every level, including economically, Lohr added.

"Upgrading properties changes neighborhoods, benefiting everyone. Monies are spent on lumber, paint, hardware and supplies, impacting the local economy," he said. "Then there is the money spent by REACH volunteers, who are also tourists, on gas, food and - on their much-deserved afternoons off - local entertainment."

During the 2017 Brownsville project, Lohr spent a morning with Jones, touring several worksites. He said he was "amazed" by what he saw: young workers and their adult supervisors "toiling in the sun in the service of others."

"I revisited those sites several times throughout the week and the progress was astonishing," Lohr said. "Just think about what these young volunteers are learning - life skills like painting, drywall and roofing - but they're also learning about teamwork and the value of giving to others."

Most importantly, Lohr said, volunteers learn that a person's value has nothing to do with income.

"As volunteers work on these homes, they get to know the people who live there, and they learn that everyone has a story worth hearing," he said.

For more information on REACH programming and its ongoing work in Fayette County, email info@reachwc.org or visit www.reachmissiontrips.org.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Kaylie Moore, Journalist, at 724-317-6924, kmoore@fayettecountypa.info.