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ST. AUGUSTINE RECORD

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The porch railing and roofing crew take a break from their work. **Contributed photos**

STRANDED

By **LORRAINE THOMPSON**
Record Correspondent

Mechanical problems on the bus on which they were traveling caused members of two local church youth groups to become temporarily stranded in the Mississippi Gulf Coast town of Lizania the week of July 14-21.

Twenty-two volunteers including members of the St. Anastasia Catholic Church and Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church youth groups and their sponsors were on an annual mission to continue to help to rebuild and repair homes and other buildings that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

The bus arrived safely, but on the third day of the mission, the brakes went out leaving the volunteers without their own transportation between the camp and their assigned work sites. A mission group from Oklahoma and the First United Methodist Church in Long Beach came to their rescue and shared their buses.

This was the fifth mission for the St. Anastasia Catholic Church youth group, known as SAY (St. Anastasia Youth). This year they were joined by Jacksonville's Most Holy Redeemer youth group.

The mission groups, led by youth ministers, Sharon Tomore of Most Holy Redeemer and Melody Ott from St. Anastasia, included students from St. Augustine, Pedro Menendez, Paxon and Ed White high schools, St. Joseph Academy, Gamble Rogers Middle School, Flagler College and St. Johns River Community College.

Parents John Marzulli and Tommy Corrado, both skilled workers, supervised the work projects. Angie Prosuch, a teacher at St. Augustine High School and Beth Puttick were chaperones. Both youth groups raised funds for the trip and for building supplies before heading to Camp Hope.

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LEFT: Derek Droege a senior at Pedro Menendez High School, doing roof repairs.



ABOVE: Shed crew working along side.



LEFT: Megan Greenfield, a junior at St. Joseph Academy, painting a wall.

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Ecumenical ministry

The camp is part of Project Hope and Compassion, an ecumenical ministry of St. Ann's Catholic Church, Gulfport, that works with Christian churches and supporters from many denominations throughout the U.S. The mission is to bring compassionate Christian relief and hope directly to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Camp Hope provides facilities and meals for the hundreds of volunteers who continue to come from all parts of the country to assist in the clean up, demolition and reconstruction of coastal homes hard hit by the hurricane.

When they arrived at the camp, they were assigned plenty of projects to keep them busy. While much progress has been made in rebuilding the area, observed Ott, "There is still plenty to be done," she said.

"We were able to build a shed for a family whose house was completely destroyed by the storm," said Ott who explained that while the house had earlier been rebuilt by volunteers the family was storing their lawn mower and tools in their home."

The family was one of many victims of construction scams that resulted when fly-by-night contractors invaded the area after the storm. Once paid, a contractor took off with more than \$38,000 before even starting the project. The youth built the shed and then installed shelving. They also hung a ceiling fan in the kitchen.

Other projects included constructing a railing around a front porch, fixing the roof at another house, hanging drywall in a church office, and mudding drywall for a man whose house had been destroyed by the storm. They also did yard work for a disabled man,



A disabled man (Mr. Griffith) sits in his doorway flanked by the youth who painted his shed.



The youth group posed for this photo in front of their bus which had to be fixed before they could head for home.

helped to paint his shed and assisted in a long list of other projects in the area.

"We worked together and played together. We enjoyed lunches together, we helped cook meals and clean at Camp Hope," said Ott. "We also attended daily Mass." And since they had no transportation, they played kickball and softball in the evenings.

"We were scheduled to leave Mississippi on Thursday, but the bus repairs hadn't been completed. We ended up leaving on Friday at about 1:30 and got in about 10:30 p.m. So while stranded for an extra day at Camp Hope, we did some cleaning, mowed the lawn, and played games while we waited for the bus to be fixed," Ott recounted.

"In spite of being stranded, Ott said it turned out to be a fabulous trip. "Our kids worked without complaining. They were so friendly with one another, they were eager to pitch in, and with little grumbling, they even cleaned the toilets at camp. It was one of the best trips we have had except for the bus breakdown."