

Students Plan Appalachia Project

by Steve Reynolds

We have all heard of the conditions of the poor in the American Appalachian region. Appalachia includes parts of 13 states on our eastern seacoast, starting in New York State and running all the way down the Appalachian Mountain range. To most of us, the trials of those struggling with the sustenance level in these areas are only momentarily disheartening, emotions barely felt through the thickly-wrapped middle-class cloth coat in which most of our lives are wrapped.

Occasionally, however, the images of hardship brought about by the Appalachian picture can stir the soul into some form of effort. Such is the case with a group of BC students organized by Junior Gregg Cassin. On February 16th Cassin, and nineteen others (13 men and 6 women) will travel to Vanceburg, Kentucky, for eight days of service to the citizens of that Appalachian community.

Cassin, who in conjunction with Laura Kayser and Mary Ellen Roche coordinated the trip, has worked on such volunteer projects before. During Christmas of 1977 he spent several days in Vanceburg doing labor such as home repairs, remodeling, and house building. The work he did was part of the community service provided by the Glenmary Missionaries of Cincinnati, which sponsored the trip.

The Glenmary Missionaries have been working for thirty years in Appalachia, and they have an excellent relationship with the citizens whose towns they enter. People there, says Cassin, easily accept the Glenmary workers into their homes and lives. Cassin recalls his experience there: "The people in the town were very warm to us, made us feel very welcome. In the mornings we would get up and get to work, about 9:00. After work that day you'd have your nights free. Generally we'd have dinner with one of the families we worked with. One night, we rented a hall and had a dinner for much of the town. I think I got more out of the whole thing than I ever expected."

Getting something out of the experience is definitely a motivation for the group, but the act of giving something is more important to the group. "We're out to raise the awareness of the BC students in terms of the people of Appalachia, and to make available information about their volunteer groups. People can't conceive of third world conditions existing in our own country."

There are other trips possible for next Christmas and spring vacations. To raise money for this February's project, the group plans to hold raffles of beer, liquor, and

dinners to the Golden Lantern with surprise BC celebrities, and also hopes to run a coffee-house.

Lodging arrangements and contacts with residents who need work done will be made by Glenmary. A Glenmary missionary will be present as an adviser to the group during its stay.

Should the trip be successful, it may open many doors for the

culture, combined with the opportunity to genuinely assist an Appalachian community in need of a strong back or two, should be given serious consideration.

There are still spots available for two male volunteers on the upcoming trip. Anyone interested is urged to contact either Gregg Cassin at Cushing 201A or the Chaplain's office.



Gregg Cassin, coordinator of Appalachian trip.

future. It is the hope of Cassin and company that the endeavor will be self-sustaining, that in coming years it will be continued by other interested students. The trip may also become incorporated with the Pulse program if it gains enough support.

Whatever its fate, this form of volunteer trip is the first of its kind to be attempted at BC in recent memory and the chance to experience a different American

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