



Foreign Mission Trip Inspires Backyard Ministry

by Valerie Beck

In 2007, 19 members of St. Mark, Flint, led by their pastor Rev. Gary Beck, ventured to Agua Viva Children's Home in Chimaltenango, Guatemala for their very first mission trip. The blessings received from this experience were beyond description. The team only wished others could have experienced a similar week, especially those who were unable to travel because of finances, health limitations, and family obligations.

Little did they realize, waiting right in their own backyard was another children's home, also run by wonderful committed Christians, whose facilities were in dire need of renovation.

The young boys at the home, like the children in Guatemala and around the globe, are like all children who need a warm and safe environment to work through difficult life situations with the help of God.

A team member's wife had the idea to create a mission trip that did not require passports, special immunizations, and sleeping arrangements, but just an hour drive north of Flint to The Lutheran Home.

Other members of the team, having been energized by the

Guatemalan experience, launched the mission project. With a generous grant from Thrivent Regions in Care, a new mission experience was soon underway, entitled "Adopt-a-Room."

The Lutheran Home in Bay City is a beautiful facility. However, inside this English Tudor brick home are rooms that desperately needed paint, new flooring, patching, and tender loving care. It was decided that the monies and manpower could best be used to improve the nine bedrooms.

Many members of St. Mark make two trips a week to rip up floors, paint, improve electrical work, and refurbish woodwork. Holy Cross, Flushing has also joined the efforts and adopted two bedrooms.

The Lutheran Home was established in 1929 and has helped hundreds of boys and families. Its program is recognized throughout the state as a prominent residential treatment program. The boys, ages 12-18, enjoy the residential neighborhood and attend area schools. Keenly aware of appropriate guidance, the boys are active in a number of community service projects and experience outdoor camping activities. Independent living instruction and Christian education are a requirement. This stepping stone of life is the hope many boys need to be successfully independent.

What began as a wonderful first mission trip to Guatemala, has continued with loving immediate neighbors. Volunteers should be warned. If they go once, they will most likely return ... in a missionary's heart beat!

Valerie Beck serves St. Mark, Flint as a Bible class leader and is active in the music ministry and the Hearts and Hands Social Ministry. She is employed in the math department at Mott Community College. Valerie and her husband, Rev. Gary Beck of St. Mark's, have three children.

The Lutheran Home is a residential facility providing quality service for adolescent males. It is operated by Lutheran Child and Family Service of Michigan. For more information visit www.lcfsmi.org or call 989.892.8564.

