



2010 Appalachia Outreach War, West Virginia

We are excited to announce three upcoming Hope Force Reservist West Virginia trips! Our team is eager to serve together as Reservists to help those in Appalachia. Come ready to work hard, enjoy meeting Reservists from around the country and participate in some special group activities.

Here are the details:

- Location:** War, West Virginia
- Dates:** September 2 – 6, 2010 (Labor Day Weekend)
October 24 – 31, 2010
November 3 – 7, 2010
- Cost:** \$25 per day per person (lodging and food)
\$150 per person for materials donation
- Tasks:** Roofing, painting, cooking and more
- Transportation:** Participants are responsible for their own transportation to War.
- Accommodation:** Dormitory style housing
- Registration:** To secure a place on one of these teams (space is limited), please complete the attached registration and email to me at dubys@hopeforce.org.

THE VISION:

As we turn our hearts, our time and resources to the chronic poverty in McDowell County of West Virginia, our goal is to inspire hope through acts of love and practical assistance. With the help of our reservists and volunteers we plan to offer assistance to families to create dry and safe dwellings. Our desire is to offer assistance that doesn't inadvertently promote a spirit of dependency and poverty.

We will assist and empower the people of West Virginia, as opposed to just "doing it all" for them. Families will be asked to have able family members work alongside Hope Force Reservists. As well, those served will be required to contribute financially (on a sliding scale) to materials purchased, giving them a sense of ownership in the project. Through word and deed, we seek to be a "ministry of presence" and action to those who face these suffocating needs.

THE NEED:

Southern West Virginia, located in the heart of Appalachia, is a mountainous region with virtually no public transportation. From the 1920's through the 1950's, the area was fueled by coal mining money. Even at the beginning of the coal mining industry, when

the companies shipped families in to work and live in these hills, communities were made to be dependent upon the company for everything - their livelihood, their homes, even the groceries they bought at the Company store.

The Company built the infrastructure of the coal camps, bought up all the land in the mountains, brought in the doctor, and built the schools and churches. They provided everything to support the workforce. By owning nearly all of the land in the county, the coal companies also were able to control what other businesses came into the area. They essentially only allowed support businesses for mining. The economy was wholly dependent upon coal.

Over the past four decades, the coal companies pulled out of southern West Virginia, leaving in their wake fragmented, declining communities. McDowell County in particular lost more than three-fourths of its population over the past 50 years. The only mining today consists of small mines that pay low wages and offer minimal benefits. Meanwhile, in a parallel development, Lyndon B. Johnson's "war on poverty" arrived in the mid-1960s. As a matter of fact, the first recipient of food stamps in the entire United States was a family in McDowell County.

Not long after came the "welfare check," which soon meant that the coal companies had been replaced by the government. The welfare system in place at the time, while apparently well meaning, further perpetuated a widespread dependence upon institutionalized assistance.

Today McDowell County is dealing with fifth-generation welfare families, those who are living in persistent, inter-generational poverty. Currently 82.6% of the children in the county are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. The child abuse and neglect rate is 32.2% with over 500 substantiated cases in 2009. Over 64% of the housing is considered to be substandard and there has been no new housing construction since the 1970's. Approximately 67% of the homes in McDowell County lack any type of wastewater systems and are using "straight pipes" directly into the streams. The infrastructure is failing and the topography does not lend itself to traditional wastewater systems. Many areas do not have public water available and must "cart" their water from various spouts in the county. Most of the area's houses, remnants of former coal camps, are dilapidated and continue to lack basic amenities.

The coal mined from this county built the infrastructure of this state, yet when the mines closed, those in McDowell County felt forgotten by the state. Those who reside in the "Free State of McDowell" are a proud people but have lost their sense of hope.

Hope Force International (HFI) is a Christian response to the need that surrounds us at home and abroad, reaching out to those who experience suffering and loss. As a leading non-profit organization dedicated to disaster response, HFI is comprised of individuals who are dedicated to utilizing their expertise to inspire, equip and empower thousands of volunteers to intervene in areas of crisis around the world.