

Visions crew likes the trade-off

Youths offer their services and get a new world view

by Sunni Bradshaw
of the Leader

PABLO – Changes are occurring around the Mission Valley, thanks to a series of projects contributed by Visions International, a group of service-oriented teens from affluent families throughout the United States.

In the past few weeks, the group of 16 girls and 10 boys performed trail maintenance for the Tribes' wildlands recreation program, spruced up the Ravalli Hill visitors' center, built dugouts at a Ronan baseball field and assisted the Blue Bay Healing Center with special projects.

Ronan will soon see a wish come true as their efforts shape a community teen center in the attic of the United Methodist Church, as well.

Some materials for the projects were provided by local groups and businesses. The Tribes supplied tools for trail and garden work, Woody's donated lumber for the dugouts and the church contributed electrical wiring for the new facility. Additional items were purchased by Visions.

Teens ages 15 through 18 are recruited by Visions International each year to take part in service-oriented "summer camps." The recruits pay a tuition, which covers room, board and miscellaneous expenses. The rest goes to buy job supplies.

After looking at different areas and "seeing what needs are," camp administrators work with local groups and individuals to set up service projects, said Kevin Hortens, the organization's western director.

The campers are expected to spend 60 percent of their available time contributing to designated community projects, and the remaining hours are for recreating. Approximately four weeks are allotted in an area.

On the fun side, the group has experienced the Arlee Pow Wow, whitewater rafting, rock climbing, backpacking, swimming in McDonald Lake and horseback riding during their stay here.

The young Visions volunteers are motivated, "politically and ecologically," Hortens said. "They are aware and full of ideas how things should be and their part in that. We give them a chance (to do so)."

To facilitate their stay in western Montana, Salish Kootenai College president Joe McDonald arranged free housing at the school's day care center, and helped with local introductions.

Rob Sands and Diane Grant helped coordinate the teen center remodeling, Arlene Templer arranged the dugout work, Fred Matt assisted tribal-related jobs and Blue Bay endeavors were handled by Anna Whiting.

How do the participants feel about their time spent in the Mission Valley?

Joey Bacal of Amherst, Mass., expressed the feelings of many of the group: "I came because I have a growing interest in Native Americans and their cause. I feel we owe them. This is their native land and they've been exploited and treated unfairly."

New York City resident Peter Aviron also expressed an appreciation for the beauty and the different culture here. The biggest difference he noticed was spacial.

"At home, every two steps there's a building or a person. Here, the sky is so open I can see for miles," he said.

Fellow worker Rachel Pickard of Philadelphia added this area is "a lot less dirty" than her hometown, "and it's peaceful."



New dugout at the Ronan city ballfields takes shape under the hammers of Visions International members Beth Geller of Deerfield, Ill.,

and J. R. Melliker of Baltimore, aided by advisor Matt Turner (far right).

Teen center is a group effort

by Sunni Bradshaw
of the Leader

RONAN – A teen center has long been on the "wish list" for youth organizations here, and recently a temporary solution to the problems of "where and how" came about through volunteer efforts.

Upstairs in the United Methodist Church, an unused attic is being remodeled, complete with outside entrance, to be used as a public youth center.

The church is furnishing space and electrical improvements for the enterprise. In exchange, labor and materials for the project are being donated by Visions International, a group of service oriented teens visiting the area. (See related story.)

According to Rev. Dick Marine, Visions directors received the site suggestion from Rob Sands, Teen Task Force member. After discussion, church offi-

cialists agreed to donate use of the attic and oversee the facility.

Sands hopes to develop a teen board to organize and manage the operation of the center, said Marine. Ideas currently being considered include supervised after-school and weekend programs. The youngsters will also see to furnishing the space.

Using the site is a win-win situation, Marine said. The church is in a good location to serve area youth, construction costs are minimal, the space was formerly not being used, and the endeavor serves as an outreach program for the religious group.

If the center doesn't prove successful, the space will revert to the church.

But poor response is not on the pastor's mind. "We hope it goes real well, said Marine. In fact, he wants it to flourish to the point "the community will see the need and build a bigger one."