

Visions International on the move

In May, Visions International will be moving its offices from Middle Ridge Road to the former Highland Presbyterian Church at 110 N. Second St. in Newport. Visions is a non-profit, nonsectarian organization whose primary purpose is to provide teenagers with meaningful community service projects and cross-cultural experiences during a summer residential program. It was founded by Mel Bornstein, based on his experiences with the successful Longacre Farm, a private summer program in Marklesville.

Since 1989, more than 1,400 youth ages 14 to 18 have participated in Visions' programs from Alaska to the Dominican Republic. Participants have accomplished a range of projects including the construction of houses for impoverished individuals, schools, medical clinics and community centers. Participants have also assisted in urban soup kitchens, nonprofit daycare centers, and summer camps for low-income families and the preparation of Native American ceremonies such as the Sundance. They have taught Latino youth basic English skills, tutored Native American children and built and maintained trails in alpine and tropical wildernesses.

Last summer, Visions hosted as summer program in Perry County. Last July 15 students based at Newport Elementary School, built an outdoor classroom for the school, constructed floor-to-ceiling storage shelves for faculty and volunteered with the Perry County Day Camp. Outdoor activities including a guided canoe trip down the Susquehanna, rock climbing and hiking along the Appalachian Trail.



BUILDING GOODWILL — Members of Visions International work on a summer project.

This summer approximately 330 youth will participate in 15 summer programs lasting from three to five weeks. Programs will take place in Alaska, Montana, the British Virgin Islands, The Dominican Republic, Dominica and Guadeloupe.

Visions International also operates Visions Youthworks, an alternative high school for disadvantaged youth located on Market Street in Harrisburg. Youthworks challenges youth age 16 to 24, primarily high school dropouts, with on-the-job construction training, rigorous academics leading to a high school diploma and community service. In 1996, Youthworks' 50 trainees will rehabilitate four low-income housing units in Harrisburg, restore the facades of an additional 25,

tutor 50 elementary school children and participate in the city's Adopt-A-Block Beautification Program, all while studying for their high school diploma. All trainees are enrolled in AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps program.

The Highland United Presbyterian Church building has been a Newport landmark since the 1840s. The congregation has moved to new quarters in Howe Twp. The church building and offices will provide space for Visions. Visions International employs eight people in its year-round operation in Newport. The staff grows to 80 in the summer. In addition Visions' year-round alternative high school in Harrisburg enrolls 50 corpsmembers and employs a staff of 15.