

Teen volunteers make repairs and a difference

BY SHARON KILEY MACK
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HARRINGTON — Irish Kent, 71, lost her husband 10 months ago and the pain is still very fresh. "I would clean up the house, dust and so on, but I kept thinking 'Who cares? Why do I bother?'"

But this week, a group of teenage volunteers from Ohio may just have sparked a bit of hope in the Harrington senior citizen.

Under the guidance of the Maine Sea Coast Mission, the teens from the United Methodist Church of Mentor, Ohio, installed all new windows in Kent's 30-year-old mobile home.

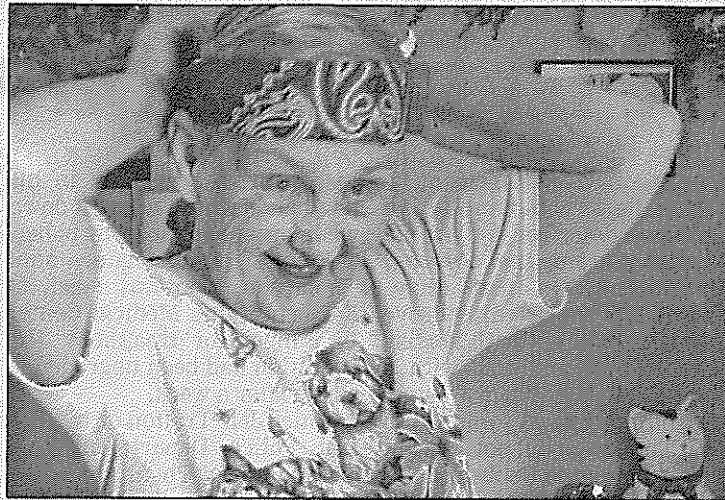
They put in a new sliding glass door and repaired the floor where the old one had leaked and ruined the insulation under the trailer. They installed new insulation and a wooden skirt, built a handicapped-accessible ramp and new stairs and painted Kent's deck.

"This gives me a reason to go forward," Kent said Thursday, clearly overwhelmed by the group's generosity.

Kent's home was one of dozens that will be renovated this summer by more than 250 out-of-state volunteers with the Maine Sea Coast Mission. The mission provides spiritual, health and youth development programs in coastal and island communities from midcoast to Down East.

The teen volunteers have come from Pennsylvania, Ohio and Massachusetts to homes owned by low-income, elderly or disabled residents. They've put on roofs, installed drywall, built ramps and helped make dozens of homes more winter-worthy and safe, said Scott Shaw of Maine Sea Coast Mission, who has been organizing the work effort for eight years.

"We have 11 crews this summer; more than double what we've had in the past," he said. Funding for the supplies



BDN PHOTO BY SHARON KILEY MACK.

Irish Kent, 71, tries on a blue bandanna Thursday, a gift from a work crew of teen volunteers that have been rehabilitating her mobile home in Harrington all week.

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IRISH KENT

comes from the Sea Coast Mission, the Washington Hancock Community Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Housing Agency and the church groups themselves. Repairs are scheduled in locations from Steuben to Beals Island.

"The need is extreme," Shaw said. "These people really need our help." Shaw estimated that between \$40,000 and \$50,000 worth of building supplies will be used by the volunteers. "The value of the donated labor is priceless," he said.

The groups have been housed at the mission's chapel in Cherryfield, at Cherryfield School and at a local church.

"We don't do this for the thank-yous," Jeff McMillan, one of the adults with the teenagers, said Thursday. "We believe, as Christians, that we are not just called to pray but are called to action."

This summer's work mis-

sion was the first for Kyle Nagle, 16. "It is a lot of fun," he said. "It doesn't feel like work at all. It is so great to be helping people."

"They won't let me do a thing," Kent said from her easy chair. "They put in a new window and they even rehung the curtains. These kids want to help others rather than doing mischief. I am so proud of them."

Kent said when she used to sit alone in her living room she could feel the cold draft on her legs and feet. "I'll be warm this year," she said, adding that with the new handicapped-accessible ramp she will be able to entertain visitors, especially a dear friend who lives just a few doors away but couldn't get into Kent's home because she uses a wheelchair.

"Thank you is just two little words, but if I said it all day, it would not be enough," Kent said.

As the teenagers packed up



BDN PHOTO BY SHARON KILEY MACK.

Aidan Walsh (top) and Amy Cilensek, both 17 and from Ohio, help paint the new wheelchair ramp at Iris Kent's home in Harrington. "These kids want to help others rather than do mischief," Kent said Thursday. "I'm so proud of them."

their paintbrushes and left for the day Thursday, Kent got a bit teary. She accepted a gift of a blue bandanna — just like

the one the kids were wearing — and a mosaic steppingstone of a cross for her garden. Kent took a few moments to com-

pose herself before asking for a group hug.

"You really are wonderful, wonderful kids," she said.