



# THE FRONT PORCH

warmer  
safer  
drier®

## Look What YOU Did This Past Summer...

PEOPLE SERVED	1,442
Children	545
Elderly	241
Disabled	439
Veterans	32
Single parents	77
Grandparents raising grandchildren	44
HOMES REPAIRED	519
PROJECTS COMPLETED	3,296
VOLUNTEERS	14,101
SUMMER CENTERS	32
<b>FAMILIES STILL IN NEED:</b>	<b>4,670</b>

## More of What YOU Made Possible This Summer...

*Thanks to your support, ASP's staff and volunteers completed a whopping 3,296 building projects this summer throughout Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Here are totals for some of our bigger projects:*

22	Bedroom additions
56	Foundations repaired
7	Bathroom additions
719	Floors
282	Insulated/weatherized
200	Roof repairs/installations
89	Siding installations
178	Doors/windows
576	Ceilings/walls
125	Underpinning
427	Porch/steps/ramps
106	Wiring updated/plumbing/septic systems

**Thank you for serving others in 2014!**

## 'Sometimes it's Rough, But God Is Always there to Pick You Up'

A grateful grandma gives thanks for your compassion



*Six-year-old Cheyanne loves  
her Grandma Jo...*

serves in Appalachia, Jo's family lives well below the poverty line. Parts of the little mobile home where Jo lives with nine family members are in severe disrepair. A bad leak in the roof has led to collapsing ceilings, rotting floors and electrical damage. But, thanks to friends like YOU, we're doing something about that...

*Story continues on page 2*

Lydia Jo Farmer\*, 64, sits on her porch, talking about her life. It hasn't been an easy one. She comes from the mountains of Magoffin County, Kentucky – one of thirteen children. She's lived here for some 35 years. She's disabled now by severe arthritis but tries not to let it slow her down. Jo's suffered through more than her share of loss and hardship, but she's one of those people who always seems more concerned about others than about herself.

Lydia Jo (Jo for short) is the matriarch of the family. She has held them – brothers, sisters, children, and grandchildren – together through thick and thin. It's been mostly thin. Like all the families ASP



## In Memory



**Mary Jane Gipson Prater**  
1970 - 2013



*When Mary Jane was too sick to leave the house, Jo used an old video camera and tv monitor to bring her beloved outdoors inside.*

## Cover Story *continued from cover page*

Jo's granddaughter, 6-year-old Cheyanne, strokes her grandmother's tired shoulders. Jo is talking about her daughter Mary Jane (Cheyanne's aunt) who died of colon cancer last year. "She was only 42," Jo says. When Jo tears up, Cheyanne comforts her grandmother with a hug and a smile. For almost all of Jo's life, it's been the other way around. She's been the rock, the comforter, the one taking care of everyone else...

"Mary Jane loved these mountains," Jo says as her eyes fill with tears. "But she got too sick even to take the few steps outside to breathe in the fresh air." When Mary Jane was confined to a couch in their run-down house, Jo dreamed up a solution: she set up an old video camera outside and beamed in images of Mary Jane's beloved outdoors to a tv monitor. "She'd lay and watch the leaves rustle for hours."

Mary Jane's 26-year-old son, "Little Joe," as everyone calls him, smiles at the memory. Little Joe was born disabled – he still has seizures – but he's as tough as his grandmother and he's smart and resourceful. Over the past couple of years Little Joe, a die-hard University of Kentucky fan, has provided the little income that has sustained the family by harvesting and selling roots – yellow root, red root, ginseng, etc. – used to make medicinal supplements.

"Little Joe's a fine young man," Jo says. "I don't know what I'd do without him. I'm grateful for him and for every one of our blessings." Jo's gratitude runs deep. You can see it in her face. A kindness in her eyes remains in spite of her suffering...

Through every hardship that life has dealt Jo – through her own illnesses, through the death of her daughter and a beloved younger brother, through hunger and poverty, and much more – Jo has clung to her faith. "I always feel like God has preserved my life and given me strength so that I can serve others. Sometimes it gets rough, but He's always there to pick me up."

She pauses, and sounds from the ASP volunteer crew working at the back of the house fill the void. There's the hum of a circular saw, the banging of hammer on nails, the bantering of volunteers planning the next stage of the project.



*Little Joe helps keep the family afloat by gathering and selling medicinal roots found in the nearby mountains*

**"I don't know how to thank you for this work," Jo says. "My biggest concern in life has been this house falling down. I didn't know what we were going to do. I only wanted a place where my children and grandchildren would be warm, safe, and dry. And now, thanks to you, we'll have that."**

Story continues on page 3

## Cover Story *continued from page 2*

There's a wonderful satisfaction built into this work repairing houses for families in critical need. But when you come to know the people you're serving – a family like Jo's – the blessing is magnified.

When you sit on a small porch and hear of a family's struggles, of deeply personal losses and of love, you remember that behind every house that YOU help us to make warmer, safer and drier, there are stories. There are people like Jo and Little Joe who are so grateful for your kindness. People you may never meet, but people who will remember you in their prayers every night before they fall asleep.

Thank you for being a friend to ASP and to good people like Jo. You are a critical part of this work. An agent of change in one of the poorest parts of our country. An angel, bringing hope and happiness, providing a light that shines brightly in the darkness. THANK YOU! **ASP**



*Jo is grateful to ASP volunteers – and to YOU – for giving her family the gift of a house that is now warmer, safer and drier.*

\*Names changed to protect family's privacy.

## BJ's amazing story of transformation *continued from page 5*

After this gruesome discovery, BJ became a man on a mission. Frantically, he searched all over town – in pubs, diners, and other local hangouts – seeking out the guy who had killed his pets, his two best friends in the world. The tight knit community had begun to see a change taking place in BJ – a softening of the bully they knew from the time he was just a kid. Still they couldn't forget his past and BJ's frequent run-ins with the law. They were terrified that BJ might literally *kill* this guy for what he had done!

But BJ had a different agenda when that inevitable encounter took place (there's only so many places you can hide in a small town). Miraculously, God had removed the lifelong anger that raged within BJ's body, replacing bitterness with His spirit of kindness and mercy. When the two came face-to-face, BJ recalled his words to the man who had committed such a heinous crime – an unimaginable act of malice towards BJ and the animals he loved so much...

*I told him "I was sorry for all the meanness and the way I've treated you – that I treated you so badly as to make you want to do something like this."*

And then BJ had one last thing to say to his former enemy before turning to walk away – something that no one would've ever thought possible from the guy whose heart was once as hard as his fists.

*"I came here to forgive you for killing my dogs."*

Needless to say, there wasn't a dry eye on that front porch when BJ finished telling us his incredible story. It always seems to happen, at those times when I begin to swell with pride over the many wonderful things ASP does to help those in need throughout these hills of Appalachia, God steps in and reminds me just how much these families and individuals minister to us – to our staff, youth leaders, volunteers. I can tell you with certainty, BJ sure ministered to me on that warm July afternoon in Harlan County, Kentucky... a day when the story of God's powerful and transforming love took front and center stage on an old, crowded porch – a day I'll always remember. **ASP**



*Dr. Walter Crouch,  
President & CEO*

## Pictures & Notes from Walter's Summer Journal:

### *BJ's amazing story of transformation*

Seeing up close the transformation that takes place in these mountains each summer – not only in the homes being repaired but in the lives of our volunteers and families served – is far and away the most rewarding part of my job. On one steamy July afternoon, I found myself on a rickety porch surrounded by a dozen or so young teenage volunteers and a rugged, wiry guy named Billy Joe – someone I will never forget.

Billy Joe (or BJ as he's known around these parts) grew up as a mean son of a gun – a bully who liked to fight and put a hurt on anyone who rubbed him the wrong way.

BJ told us that his mother would often say that all she wanted in this world was to have her little boy back again. But after a hard upbringing and a stint in the military, the “boy” in BJ was long gone. He was now an angry young man, just mad at the world.

As we took a break from work and the blazing sun on that July afternoon, BJ pointed to a home that was barely visible down a winding gravel road. “*Y'all see that house down there,*” BJ said, squinting in the distance. “*The man that lives there, he's the definition of a true neighbor. Yep. Everyone should be so lucky to have a neighbor like him.*”

Year after year, this good neighbor would tell BJ that he'd be waiting at 9 am each Sunday morning at the bottom of the hill, hoping and praying that BJ would one day accept his invitation to come to church and hear the pastor preach.

Reluctantly, and in an attempt to get this well-intentioned neighbor off his back once and for all, BJ finally accepted the invitation – but with a couple of caveats attached. “*I told him that we'd need to sit in the very back row and that I was out of there if anyone came up and asked me to join the church,*” explained BJ. It was at the very end of the service, when the pastor issued an altar call. To this day, BJ can't explain exactly what happened. “*I just found myself walking to the front of the church and I knelt at that altar and began to weep. I couldn't remember crying since I was just a kid.*”

After sobbing for what he believed to be about fifteen minutes, BJ recalls slowly lifting his head to find that the church was now completely empty – except for one person. His neighbor was there, standing beside him. Incredibly, it had actually been nearly *three hours* that BJ had his head bowed, tears streaming down his cheeks! BJ has his own way of describing it...

*“I guess I cried all the meanness out of me that day.”*

It wasn't long after that Sunday that BJ found himself “tested.” The volunteers and I were all horrified as BJ told of the day he returned home from work to find his two beloved dogs beaten to death on the same front porch where we were gathered. They had been killed by one of his former enemies.



*Billy Joe (in the red t-shirt) with ASP volunteers.*

Story continues on page 3



# Ralph Wicke, faithful group member and ASP supporter/leader

By Tim Norton, Chief Advancement Officer

For nearly 20 years, since their first summer of service with ASP in 1998 in Wayne County, West Virginia, Garber United Methodist Church, New Bern, NC has been serving the people of Appalachia; making their homes warmer, safer and drier.

One very faithful member of that congregation, Ralph Wicke, is, in many regards, responsible for the long-term relationship between Garber UMC and ASP. A former ASP Board member, now an emeritus member, Wicke is credited with strong support in ASP's early years as a leader of the organization including drawing up its first construction manual, obtaining much-needed dump trucks, and recruiting groups to serve as volunteers.



Ralph Wicke

Most importantly, Wicke is credited with *“providing life-changing opportunities for hundreds of his fellow church members, and impacting the lives of many families in Central Appalachia and the Kingdom of Heaven,”* said Walter B. Crouch, ASP President/CEO. *“ASP gives thanks for the life and ministry of Ralph Wicke, and his fellow volunteers from Garber United Methodist Church.”*



And even though Ralph, and wife, Joan, weren't able to join Garber UMC this year on its annual summer trip – as they have moved to Pennsylvania to be near their family – his influence was a beacon of light, both for Garber team members and for the families served by ASP.

This past summer was the first time that Ralph wasn't able to participate in the trip in person. Nevertheless, Garber UMC served families in Tazewell County, Tennessee. Pictured with this article is a group photo that was sent to Wicke with a 2014 ASP t-shirt in recognition of his influence on this group.

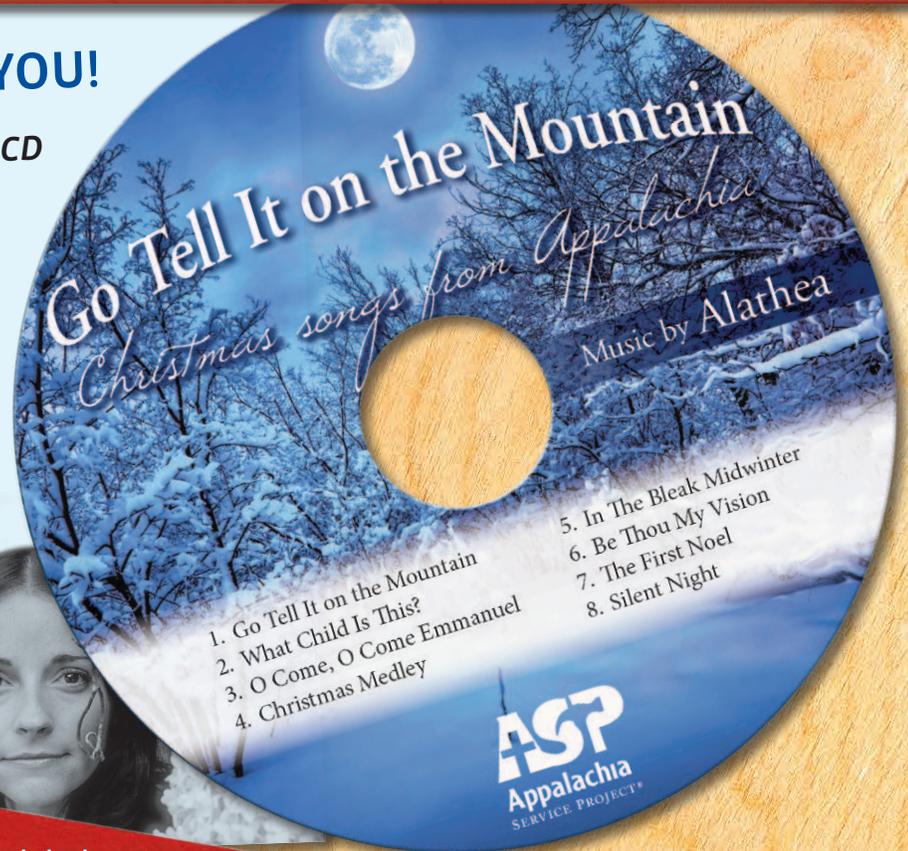
***“If you have ever had the pleasure of visiting or working with Ralph, you know his love for ASP and the people who serve can be heard in each word he speaks and seen in each action he takes. We thank God for sending His servant, Ralph Wicke, to spread the word of ASP’s mission and love of Jesus to all he encounters.”***

— Statement by the Garber United Methodist Church ASP Group 2014

## A FREE Christmas gift for YOU!

*Be on the lookout... a special Christmas CD will be arriving in your mailbox soon!*

As a small gift for all you do, ASP is mailing you a CD of Christmas songs by the acclaimed female duo from Tennessee and ASP supporters **Alathea**. We hope these beautiful Christmas songs will warm your heart and home this holiday season and remind you of the many lives being transformed because of your generous support!



Learn about our new initiative at:  
[ASPHome.org/CSP](http://ASPHome.org/CSP)  
Like us on Facebook at:  
[Facebook.com/ASPCSP](https://Facebook.com/ASPCSP)

## What is #GIVINGTUESDAY?

We have a day each year for giving thanks. We have two days for getting deals. Now, we have #GivingTuesday, a global day dedicated to giving back. On Tuesday, December 2, 2014, folks around the world will come together for one common purpose: to celebrate generosity and to give. Even better: Every gift given to ASP online that day will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$25,000!

- ▷ Go to: [ASPHome.org/give](http://ASPHome.org/give)
- ▷ Chose Giving Tuesday as your gift designation
- ▷ Your gift will be matched!



Join us and be a part of a global celebration of a new tradition of generosity - the perfect way to start off the holiday season!