



BriAnna Williams  
cleans her living-room  
window. "It was her  
way of feeling proud  
of what we have  
done," says Angelo  
Cajili, BS Acc '92.  
Cajili was one of 14  
MU volunteers who  
spent spring break in  
Westmoreland County,  
Va., performing

## Manual labor for spiritual rewards

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NANCY O'CONNOR



**S**pray, wipe; spray, wipe; BriAnna Williams, 6, scrubs the windows. She wipes away the dust on the glass. Flying dust collected from plywood being nailed to deteriorating floor beams in the living room. Dust from the furniture being moved and the worn carpet being unrolled over the still slanting floor. But, she can't wipe away the sadness she feels.

She wants a second hug from the four MU volunteers as they leave. BriAnna hands them each a small white wildflower. They, too, are sad, knowing they have helped BriAnna and her mother, Ira, in only a small way. They know they will probably never see the Williams family again. But after one week in March, the volunteers will never forget them.

**A** group of 10 students, three alumni and a Newman Center campus minister, spent their spring break in Westmoreland County, Va. The crew from MU worked in four groups with the local housing coalition replacing porches, adding storm windows and installing new doors for county residents.

Even so, they barely made a dent in the needed repairs in the county. "I felt like all we were doing was patchwork. How can we help more?" queries Beth Pigg, a senior journalism and education major



**Westmoreland Housing Coalition team leader Henry Lee teaches Angelo Cajili how to install a lock on the Williams' new back door. The coalition coordinates home repair projects throughout the year.**

While at the Williams' home, Sharon Krull, a journalism senior from Roscoe, Ill., bonded with BriAnna. As the group prepared to leave, the child handed Krull a small gift wrapped in note paper. "I'm going to miss you," BriAnna says.



The group had a bond of Catholicism before the trip, but discovered friendship in Virginia. Each night they gathered for reflections and prayer before bedding down on the Cople Parish floor. "I really wanted a spiritual component to my spring break," says Chris Eufinger, a journalism and psychology senior from St. Louis.



Volunteers built a back porch on the Williams' home. From left are Chris Eufinger and Sharon Krull, team leaders Henry Lee and Barb Paris, and Angelo Cajili.



from Sikeston, Mo. Pigg is among the thousands of college students nationwide who are expressing a deeper concern for social issues and promoting community service. She and her group built an outhouse for John Bail. He has waited two years for the new privy, and there are 300 more repair jobs on the coalition's waiting list. The median family income of the clients is \$7,000.

**T**here are few jobs in this area of Virginia, which locals call the Northern Neck. Its rolling farmland is nestled between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers. The main industries are fishing, lumber and agriculture. Two presidents, George Washington and James Monroe, were born here, and Southern attitudes still prevail.

The students were "a gift from heaven," says Betsy Bush, executive director of the Westmoreland Housing Coalition. She planned 12 projects for the crew, but added three after they completed more than expected.

The group left Virginia wishing it could have done more.

"With frustration comes the power to act," says Scott Weinzirl, a senior psychology major from Kansas City. "And I hope we don't lose that." ☐



The Hague, Va., trip, one of several during spring break, was co-sponsored by the University "Y" and the Newman Center. The 14 volunteers left a part of themselves with each nail they hammered.