

Sensitive and Sensible Communication

When you come to your center in the summer, remember that you are a special part of a whole system of ministry. Your part fits perfectly into the scheme of other volunteers, staff, and community people who have worked hard to make this all happen. ASP staff play a large role in facilitating your experience. While trained, they have also been instructed to listen and learn from volunteers. Staff also have variables they must consider when deciding how to do home repairs. These variables are not always obvious but must be considered when determining what projects to do and how to do them:

1. time to complete repairs
2. \$ available for materials
3. volunteer skills
4. wishes of the family
5. other projects in the community

So when there is conflict regarding how to do those repairs, remember that you must **talk about it with the staff!** Reach an agreement or a compromise! We are in Appalachia to serve people that really need our services. If we fight among ourselves, we only hurt the families we want to serve. We don't want anyone to "lose face." But coming to ASP is not about US – it's about how we can serve others. Here are some points to ponder written by Glenn Kinken, long-time ASP volunteer, leader and pastor.

1. We (volunteers) are not the only ones who have had long hot days on the work site. The staff has a tough job monitoring and supporting our work in Appalachia.
2. ASP staffers are college students who may know only one way to do a particular home repair, usually outlined in the Construction Manual. If you know a better, more efficient way it is up to you to sell them on your idea, not fight them about it.
3. Compromise and calm conversations about expectations and work tasks accomplish more than shouting and tension.
4. In the greater scheme of things, the Center Director has the ultimate authority to compromise on the way jobs are done.
5. We all desire to help our brothers and sisters in Central Appalachia have warmer, safer, and drier homes.

On Sunday night, the center staff will give all group contact people a business card of the regional Field Coordinator for your center. If you have a situation in which you have talked with staff and the issue is not resolved, then call the Field Coordinator to act as a mediator for your situation. If you have not received this information, you know that you can contact the Volunteer Department in JC for guidance! ASP also has a formal complaint process that will be available to volunteers if a situation just can not be resolved through all the steps. You will need to contact the volunteer department in Johnson City for that form. Because this is the last resort, we would hope that the complaint would be detailed, constructive and sent within a week of the occurrence. This would allow ASP administrative staff the opportunity to work on a resolution – right then – not a few months later when the issue is stale and mostly forgotten. We believe if it is

important enough to warrant a formal complaint, the situation needs to be dealt with promptly.

Again, Glenn Kinken gives us a final thought on the issue of communicating with others.

“...We must turn to our Rock and Redeemer and listen to how He communicates with us. His words are patient, kind, and loving. Christ is willing to take all the time necessary to communicate His love toward us until we understand. Given this fact then we, too, should be willing to take all the time necessary, use patience, and speak in loving tones when explaining, discussing or talking with each other, our center staff, the families we help and the other groups at our center. **Have a blessed summer!**”

Story:

One of our work crews worked for a single father and his two children (we will call him John). John has had a troubled past and has spent time in prison. He is currently struggling to raise his children and obtain his GED.

John owns his home, which was in great need of repairs (completed now by ASP groups!), as well as a trailer next door. He told us that another man used to own and lived in the trailer. John did not like the man because he felt the man was a bad influence on his children. This man would drink and use foul language, etc. So John struck a deal with him. At that time, John owned a Corvette Stingray that was his pride and joy. He worked hard to keep it in good condition. But his neighbor was just more than he could take. So he offered to give the man his Stingray if the man would give him the trailer and move away. Then John wouldn't have to worry about this man's influence on his children. The man agreed, took the Stingray, and moved away. John gave up his prized possession for the sake of his children.

But that is not the end of the story. He then proceeded to allow a woman and her children, who had no home, to live in the trailer without having to pay rent. This allowed the woman to be able to keep her children. John still does not have a car. He manages to get to his GED classes by having someone drive him, by hitchhiking, or by walking...some of our families reflect God's light back to us – John is the first person we thought of.

We sometimes are guilty of the sin of pride when we think about our “sacrifice” of a week of time to volunteer for ASP. We think we are the only ones to shine the light of God's love to others. But then we meet someone like John, and we are truly humbled. Here is a man who has come out of the darkness into the light. He has been given a new beginning, and he is making the most of it. We can learn much from people like John.

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