

Giving Back

**Changing the world, one person at a time:
My work on South Dakota's Rosebud Reservation**
By Brenda Lange, Lange Communications

Because we know our community doesn't end at the county line, many of us embark on projects to benefit those who live far outside our borders. I was fortunate to do just this for 12 days last summer, on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

101 youth and adult chaperones took part in this servant trip, sponsored by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and the Tree of Life Methodist Mission.

Some of us had been assigned to work with children at a day camp in the little community of Two Strike, including my 16-year-old daughter Liz. The rest of us would perform various construction jobs around the reservation. Although most of us had little to no construction experience, we made up in enthusiasm what we lacked in expertise.

We built a wheelchair ramp on a home for a young man, and we dug a drainage ditch around the home of 76-year-old Pauline Black Wolf because several heavy rainstorms had caused her house to slide out of place. We installed two windows in Henrietta White Thunder's home, and painted and did repairs

to the Boys' and Girls' Club in Mission. And we fixed up the Powwow grounds, where the tribe honored us at the end of the week by inviting us to dance in their annual Powwow.

We also built a new playground for the children of Two Strike, across the street from the building where the Day Camp was held.

Our efforts, no matter how small we may have felt they were, were appreciated and did make a difference.

Little children everywhere have a way of wrapping their tiny fingers around your heart and pulling you into their lives. One boy, about six or seven, did just that to my daughter and one of her friends. Rylan Black Spotted Horse has chocolate brown eyes that sparkle under his jet-black hair. He joked and played with our youth and always had a wide grin on his face. But his real life was brought home to Liz and the others when he mentioned one day that he noticed they all wore "different shirts every day." They agreed with him and he said, "But I wear the same one because I lost my other one."

When some of us complained we weren't doing enough or helping enough, or thought out loud that

we weren't really making a difference, our leader, Molly Beck Dean, reminded us that the world is changed "one at a time...one at a time."

And we realized she was right. Our efforts, no matter how small we may have felt they were, were appreciated and did make a difference. Pauline Black Wolf will no longer fear a heavy rainstorm, and Henrietta White Thunder's home will be warmer this winter because of the new thermal windows. And the children of tiny Two Strike will perhaps remember the kids from Pennsylvania who built them a new playground, read with them, and played games with them for a few days. We know we will always remember them. **WA**



**"The First" will always
be first with me.**

