

Surprise Scholarship in Appalachia

Like most of us, as a young Sister, Bernie Kenny found herself in Africa. She served first in Tanzania, then in Ethiopia. But in the late 1970s, MMM was asked to provide a service in the USA. In Appalachia, strip-mining had depleted the land, and the people suffered marginalization in every sense of the word. Joining the MMM community at Clinchco, Virginia, Sister Bernie set about meeting the needs of the people in remote homesteads.



Driving a 36-ft Winnebago wagon fitted out for the purpose, Sister Bernie covered thousands of miles each year and became very well known. She took further training and qualified as a Nurse Practitioner.

In such areas, where there is no constant medical service, the concept of holding a Health Fair is very useful. Each year, the charity known as Remote Area Medical Volunteer corps (RAM) flies in a large team of experts to provide free medical, dental, vision and veterinary services for the poor, the unemployed and the non-insured.

At this year's Health Fair, held over three days at Wise County Fairgrounds, 5,598 patients were seen and more than 1.6 million dollars of health care was provided free of charge, involving 1,746 volunteers. Endless preparation is entailed, and many old acquaintances are renewed as volunteers fly in from distant places, and the people come down from the hills with ailments that cannot be treated until these specialists come.

Sister Bernie has been involved with RAM for many years. Her two nephews, Zaf and Glenn Goss, are part of the huge volunteer force. They had driven up from Florida, over five hundred miles, to lend a hand and keep the family tradition alive. They were as surprised as everyone else when, at the close of the Health Fair, it was announced that a Nursing Scholarship has been established for a resident of Dickenson County, and this has been named the 'Sister Bernie Kenny Scholarship'.

The recipient of the Sister Bernie Kenny Scholarship will have to keep a 3.0 average and the goal of the scholarship is to continue the legacy of providing health care for the under-served and to promote outreach amongst the needy.