



Good News founders Peg and Chuck MacCarthy started mission work in the West Indies in 1983

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## Good News celebrates 25 years of service

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It all started simply, with a group of friends traveling to the West Indies to help impoverished residents there.

That was 25 years ago, and since that beginning, the interfaith Good News Project headquartered in Wausau has guided more than 400 people from 30 states and eight countries to St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, Grenada and Union Island. These volunteers have used their skills to do such things as build 300 houses, renovate schools and other public buildings, provide medical care and teach.

Good News sets up the trips and uses West Indian connections to find the projects that need to be done, but volunteers pay their own expenses.

Good News helps in the Wausau area as well. It provides medical equipment such as hospital beds, crutches and wheelchairs to people who can't afford them.

It's all so much bigger than ever imagined by Dr. Chuck and Peg MacCarthy, both 69, of Wausau, the founders of Good News.

"It's the tail wagging the dog, is what it is," Peg MacCarthy said.

No one knows how many people have been helped through the Good News Project, said Tom Fladland, operations director.

"We've probably seen, in the 25 years, 100,000 students. Tens of thousands of patients. How many we've actually touched, it's impossible to guess," Fladland said.

The MacCarthys, the employees and volunteers will celebrate the milestone throughout the year. Volunteers across the country are being asked to contribute to their communities in some way on the 25th of each month.

Other ways the group will celebrate: a reunion picnic for all volunteers in Wausau in July; a posting of Good News stories written by volunteers on the organization's Web site; and an effort to get all Good News volunteers to ring Salvation Army bells starting in November.

Tom Roovers of the town of Stettin went on several Good News volunteer trips in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

"It changed my whole life," Roovers said. "It's an experience that truly touches your soul, and it captures you. You understand that you can make (a) difference."

Roovers and his wife, Mary Pat, used Good News and the mentorship of Chuck MacCarthy to help form their own group, Helping Hands, a volunteer effort that helps people living in Jamaica and Africa.

Even though the first Good News volunteer trip took place in 1983, the real genesis occurred in 1981 when the MacCarthys first traveled to St. Lucia. They went there to support Chuck MacCarthy's brother, a Catholic priest and doctor who was looking for a place to serve.

The MacCarthys connected with Catholic leaders on St. Lucia. Those leaders helped them identify areas in need of help. When the MacCarthys returned to Wausau and started speaking to friends about a plan to return to St. Lucia, they found a bunch of people willing to volunteer as well. Christine Daniels, the general manager of Good News, believes the organization grew the way it did because it's really about "the family nature of Good News."

Volunteers become part of the family when they travel, and become recruiters for more volunteers. The MacCarthys aren't sure where it's all headed, but they think folks on the West Indies will take more responsibility for projects.

"It's dawning on me now that this is a joint American/West Indian project," Chuck MacCarthy said. "They've become friends."



Volunteer Tom Quayle of New Brighton, MN, blesses a home that Good News built for a family in St. Lucia.