

Faith turns to good works



Christina Dicken / News-Leader

Jim Hinkle, a volunteer from Ridgecrest Baptist Church, pulls off old shingles from the roof of Henry Burns' home on South Campbell Avenue.

Hundreds from Ridgecrest Baptist Church use their day to minister to people's needs.

By Mark R. Fletcher
News-Leader

More than 300 members of Ridgecrest Baptist Church gave up relaxing Saturday to work hard and help others in their community.

Church members were divided into work groups, which were then sent to a dozen sites across Springfield to perform repairs and other work for individuals and organizations.

Faith, and a desire to serve others, motivated many of the volunteers.

"We feel like we need to do works to show our Christian love for other people," said Dee Smith, a work-site supervisor. "If there's a need in the community, we try to meet as many as we can."

The volunteers went into their

community to serve others, members said, and they wanted to start close to home.

"Christ commanded us to go out and minister to other people," said Mark Matthews, a volunteer helping repaint part of the Missouri Hotel. "And he told us to go to those closest to us. We're all interested in reaching all the way around the world, but you know it starts right here at home."

At one site the workers helped 85-year-old Henry Burns, a retired steel-mill worker living in Springfield, make needed repairs to his house.

Early Saturday morning, a group of them descended on Burns' white-stuccoed house, scraped the peeling

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white paint, repaired the roof and replaced a rotted post supporting the front porch.

Helping one person might seem like a small thing, "but the small things end up being a big part of somebody's life," said Vivian McGinnis, who helped work on Burns' house.

The volunteers also sent a work crew to the Benton Avenue African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The church, which has seen its membership decline over the years, needed a thorough cleaning and some minor repairs, said the Rev. Dorothy Patrick.

"The challenge is, if you don't have the people, of course you don't have the resources that are needed," Patrick said.

Hosea Bilyeu, pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, found working to help another church fulfilling.

"I'm delighted to be in a church situation, and hopefully be a help and encouragement to this church," Bilyeu said.

Patrick, who's been pastor at Benton Avenue African Methodist Episcopal for two years, appreciated what the volunteers did.

"I'm just overwhelmed," she said. "When you struggle and try to do the right thing, you do need encourage-



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Vivian McGinnis scrapes old paint from the outside of Henry Burns' home. McGinnis and other members of Ridgecrest Baptist Church volunteered their labor on several projects across town on Saturday.

ment. This is an encouragement for me as well as the members — that someone cares."

The gratitude shown to the volunteers, "was a blessing," said Vicki Riley, a project coordinator with Ridgecrest Baptist Church. "They couldn't believe the reaction of the people at the sites. How grateful they were, you could just see it in their faces. I'm sure we'll be doing this

again in the very near future."

While nearly all the volunteers considered the day fulfilling and successful, their pastor would like to see one improvement.

"I would like to see this some day be an event where all the churches do this kind of thing," Bilyeu said. "Just set aside a certain day where all the churches just decide to do this kind of work."