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Contact: Pamela Gregg
gregg@udayton.edu

NEWS RELEASE

UD REUNION TO CELEBRATE DECADES OF STUDENT SERVICE IN APPALACHIA

DAYTON, Ohio — Tony Pappano remembers how hard it was to be on the receiving end of a double dose of prejudice.

The year was 1965, the setting a small town in eastern Kentucky. Pappano and about a dozen other University of Dayton students traveled to Salyersville each weekend with clothing and other donated items for the needy in the area.

The local Appalachian industrialists, fed up with scores of VISTA volunteers organizing protests against strip mining, had no use for one more do-gooder in their midst. And he was Catholic, a pariah in the heart of Baptist country.

One segment of the Appalachian population did welcome the students, however — the needy families they were serving in the nearby hollows.

For 35 years, UD students have continued to return to Salyersville **in the spirit of fellowship, visiting families and nursing home residents and holding day camp for the children.** From the very first participants to the most recent comes a common message of inspiration, that the students always brought far more home with them than they could deliver while there.

All of those students and their advisers have been invited to celebrate the Appalachia Club at a reunion from Friday, March 3, through Sunday, March 5, at UD.

Highlights will include a day-trip to Salyersville and a dinner and roast of Appalachia Club founders, Brother Ed Nadalsky, S.M., and the Rev. Cy Middendorf, S.M., and 17-year adviser, Brother Don Smith, S.M. Pappano, who served as the first president of the service club and now lives in Tell City, Ind., will lead the roast.

Call (937) 229-2524 for full information and registration.

Sister Nancy Bramlage, S.C., who is coordinating the reunion with sophomore Jessica Gruenke, has been adviser to the program since 1988. "The purpose of the program was to enter

OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
300 College Park Dayton, Ohio 45469-1679
(937) 229-3241 (937) 229-3063 Fax
www.udayton.edu

into the Appalachian culture and form relationships with the people and offer service there," Bramlage said. "But it has also been very much a learning experience for the students."

Bramlage said the year-round weekend program evolved into a nine-week summer program in the late 1960s, but the activities remained focused on service to and fellowship with the local residents.

"We still live together with the residents in the community, and it's still a very simple lifestyle," she said. "There is running water in the homes now, but toilet facilities are still in the form of outhouses. We did have to move from the 'holler' house we were living in to one not nearly as remote in 1995, after a robbery and significant vandalism to the home we were in. It just wasn't safe anymore."

Pappano, who spent three years in the program before graduating from UD in 1968 with a degree in mechanical engineering, returned to Salyersville after graduation to spend two years there as a full-time volunteer.

"In spite of the prejudice we encountered, that whole experience was very gratifying for me and for many others," he said. "We were very excited about our work because we were really getting to the poorest of the poor. Several of us also started a program where other college students from all over the country could come and earn college credit for volunteering."

While in Kentucky, Pappano decided to pursue a master's degree in community and economic development.

"The Appalachian experience really set the stage for my whole career," he said. "I spent the next 30 years in economic development, working with low income housing projects, rehab programs, community and day care centers and simliar programs."

Gruenke, who followed Pappano's footsteps more than three decades later when she went to Salyersville with the program last summer, said the experience was life-altering.

"It was phenomenal," she said. "It's a service experience, but you get back so much more than you can give. You really learn how to live and what's important in life when you're there. I think it's because the lifestyle is so simple that the residents put value on what's really important, like love and friends and family."

Bramlage estimated that some 300 students have probably passed through the Appalachia program during its lifetime and is hoping for a good turnout for the reunion.

"We had one five years ago, and it was wonderful," she said. "We had former students from three decades, and it meant so much for the newest participants to see folks there who were their parents' ages and to hear them share the same stories they liked to share."