

## Brick by brick: Groups work to help Catholic nun

BY KIMBERLY THOMPSON STAFF WRITER [KTHOMPSON@OKLAHOMAN.COM](mailto:KTHOMPSON@OKLAHOMAN.COM)

Published: Sat, June 30, 2018 5:00 AM

NORMAN — Helping transform large piles of red dirt into brick-like blocks, volunteers from a Catholic youth mission program did their part to make a local nun's community project a success.

The Gospel of Life Dwellings program, also called GOLD, was created by Sister Maria Faulkner, of Oklahoma City. The program has several homes for older adults in the metro area and one in Texas.

Recently, members of Catholic Heart Workcamp worked alongside Faulkner on a site adjacent to Journey Church off Tecumseh Road and Interstate 35. The Gospel of Life Farm property is nearby, close to All Saints Catholic School, 4001 36th Ave. NW, and St. Mark's Catholic Church, 3939 W Tecumseh Road.

Wearing blue GOLD T-shirts given to them by Faulkner, the group shoveled dirt into a sifter that helped break down the soil and separate it from rocks. The volunteer crew stirred water and cement into buckets of the sifted dirt. The buckets of the soil/cement mixture were poured into a machine that was provided by the University of Oklahoma to transform the mix into a compressed earth block that would become a brick.

Faulkner said thousands of the bricks would be used to create a Gospel of Life Hermitage on the farm.

Many of the Catholic Heart Workcamp youths and their adult advisers came from different parts of the U.S., while others live in the metro area.

Trinity Miller, 17, traveled a long distance from St. Mary's Cathedral in Natchez, Mississippi, to Norman to join in the hard work.

"It feels good," Miller said. "I feel I'm doing it for not only just the people but for the Lord because this is what He wants for us to take care of God's children."

Some of the other youth volunteers traveled from Houston, Texas, to have a hand in creating the hermitage. Jessica Anderson, 15, joined the Catholic Heart Workcamp project with her cousin and sister from St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church in Houston.

"Makes me feel like I have accomplished something so early in my life and that everyone my age should be able to get to do something like this," Anderson said.

Faulkner said the hermitage will be a space for people to have time of solitude.

"Solitude doesn't mean loneliness. It can be filled with the presence of God and then taking that presence and sharing it with others," she said. "It will be a place of retreat for those in the ministry and a place to nurture that relationship of love with God and then with one another."

She added: "Love God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength, and then love your neighbor, as yourself."

### Moving forward despite challenges

The group from Catholic Heart Workcamp joined in the GOLD project June 18-22, the week the mission groups were in the Oklahoma City metro area.



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The nun said she remains optimistic that the project will be completed even in the face of challenges, such as the theft of 200 wood pallets that are being used to stack and transport the dirt bricks. The pallets were stolen from the work site at the farm one recent afternoon when a volunteer left the property for a short time, Faulkner said. A container has been provided to keep the pallets, tools and bricks locked up.

Faulkner said she is hoping the thieves might bring the pallets back, but even if they don't, she prays that they come to know the Lord.

The second phase of the project will be the creation of another Gospel of Life Dwelling for older adults on the farm property, Faulkner said. The third phase will be creation of a place to nurture intergenerational experiences where people may come together for wholesome fun and the building of fraternity as disciples of the Lord.

"It will be a place that will encourage family gatherings for the Gospel of Life family, but also for other families that need a place just to have some fun, and in return, they could help with the gardening, cook meals or help wash windows or whatever is needed," Faulkner said.

**CONTRIBUTING:** Religion Editor Carla Hinton

How to help

Volunteers are still needed to help with the Gospel of Life Hermitage/Gospel of Life Farm project. Donations also are being accepted.

For more information about the Gospel of Life Dwellings, to donate or become a volunteer, contact Sister Maria Faulkner at 778-1107, email [srmaria@gospeloflifedisciples.org](mailto:srmaria@gospeloflifedisciples.org) or go to [www.GospelofLifeDisciples.org](http://www.GospelofLifeDisciples.org).