

# Kermit Programs Form Helping Hands to Region's Needy

By MICHAEL HUPP

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**KERMIT** — Sometimes bad things happen to good people.

Circumstances in life can lead to poverty in the blink of an eye. Sometimes it is generational, others it is situational. Either way, sometimes a person just needs a helping hand.

**ABLE Families and Christian Help** of Kermit have been providing a helping hand under the same roof to those in need for the past 16 years.

Both organizations started in a shared building in East Kermit before the **Corps of Engineers** decided to buy the building and tear it down as part of a flood-control program in 1996.



**ABLE Families and Christian Help**

In 1998, Christian Help, together with its neighboring agency, **ABLE Families**, began construction of a building in the heart of Kermit. The two agencies occupied it in April 1999.

In 2004, the two agencies constructed a second building that provided space for an after-school classroom for **ABLE Families** and a furniture "warehouse" for **Christian Help**. That building was occupied in March 2005.

The two agencies complement one another, with **Christian Help** providing material and financial help for those in need and **ABLE Families** providing a continuum of educational programs to help people break out of poverty.



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From left, Sister Janet Peterworth, Sister Therese Carew and Sister Brendan Conlon are angels to many in the Kermit area of Mingo County, providing a multitude of services to those in need. Peterworth and Conlon retired in 2009 after helping develop and define the programs of **ABLE Families and Christian Help**.

**ABLE Families** lists its mission as "confronting the systemic causes of poverty by supporting low-income families as they make positive changes in their lives."

**Christian Help** lists its mission as responding "to situations of emergency or need with immediacy and simplicity, respecting the dignity of all, in the spirit of Jesus Christ."

Both may list different missions, but both have the same goal — to help those in need.

**Barry Hudeck**, executive director for both organizations, said the organizations mean a lot to those in need.

"There is so much need in this area that

anything you do is beneficial," Hudeck said. "It's very easy to help and not hard to find need."

In the fall of 2009, as **Christian Help** and **ABLE Families** celebrated their 15th anniversary in Mingo County, Sister **Brendan Conlon** retired as director at the age of 82. On the occasion, she was awarded the 35th Star Medal from West Virginia Gov. **Joe Manchin**.

Sister **Janet Peterworth**, director of **ABLE Families**, also retired in 2009. They helped build the organizations' presence in Mingo County from the beginning.

Hudeck said their love and service for

the community can never be measured.

"They poured themselves into these programs and truly defined what our agencies are about," Hudeck said.

Hudeck, who took over as executive director in September 2009, said he still calls the women daily for advice.

"They both still live in the community, and I have both their numbers on speed-dial," Hudeck said.

Hudeck said the programs are not a handout. He said the people of West Virginia are resilient and capable of helping themselves.

"Sometimes life is hard, and people need some help. We give them those resources to help them help themselves," Hudeck said.

Hudeck said a middle-aged man recently spent six months studying for his GED. He had not graduated from high school and wanted to complete the program to improve his job prospects.

"He did it through the resources we provided him, but he did it on his own and was reflective of what our organizations are about," Hudeck said. "I was proud to shake his hand."

**ABLE Families and Christian Help** can be life changes, from helping fill out college applications to providing low- or no-cost furniture, clothing and food to taking county residents to doctor appointments to offering after-school computer training and even helping with dental care.

"Sometimes life in southern West Virginia has different circumstances for those living in other parts of the country. We just try to level the playing field," Hudeck said.