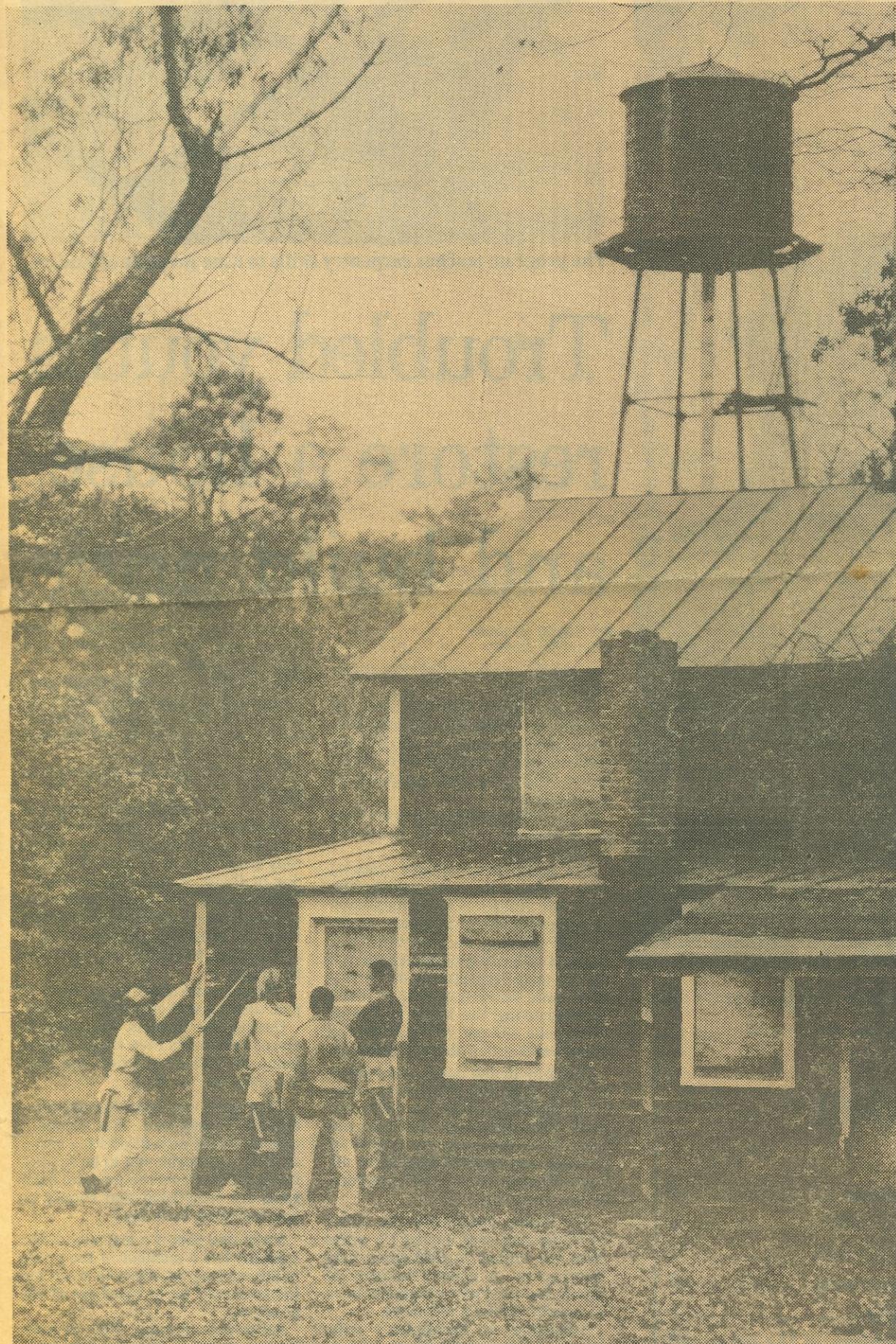


Neighbors

Beverly
Burlington City
Burlington Township
Cinnaminson
Delanco
Delran
Eastampton
Edgewater Park
Hainesport

Lumberton
Medford
Medford Lakes
Mount Holly
New Hanover
Palmyra
Pemberton Borough
Pemberton Township
Riverside

Riverton
Shamong
Southampton
Springfield
Tabernacle
Westampton
Willingboro
Woodland
Wrightstown



Special to The Inquirer / DAN MILLER

UNDER A YEAR-OLD PROGRAM sponsored by the state Department of Corrections, nine students on probation for crimes such as accept-

ing stolen property, breaking and entering, burglary and theft are restoring a historic house in Whitesbog Village. Story on Page 2.

Restoring a house — and building pride

BUSINESS / Page 4

A place for turkeys to grow fat and happy

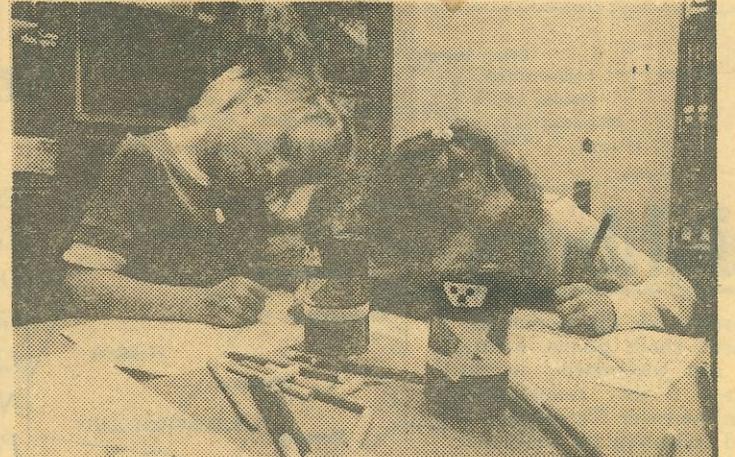
GOVERNMENT / Page 6

They say it's time for tough talk on trash

LIVING / Page 12

It takes 4 steps to walk across this post office

NEIGHBORS IN THE NEWS / Page 16



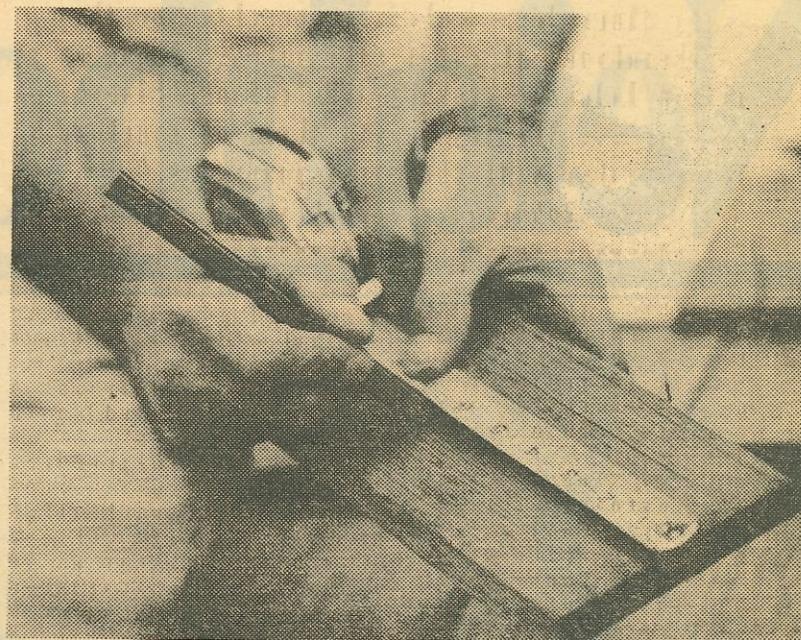
In Washington Township, a crafty way to make use of old soda cans.

COVER STORY



Special to The Inquirer / DAN MILLER

Supervisor Brad Stewart helps two teens set flashing on a new cedar roof at the paymaster's office



The program teaches carpentry skills to nine juvenile offenders

Troubled youths restore a house and build pride

By Nicole Brodeur
Special to The Inquirer

It was no surprise that the porch had caved in.

People familiar with the history of Whitesbog Village say workers from the cranberry bogs would fill the cedar-plank porch of the small house, waiting for their paychecks to be distributed.

What may be surprising is how the porch and the rest of the house are being rebuilt.

The house is no longer teeming with workers, but with teenage students on probation for crimes such as accepting stolen property, breaking and entering, burglary and theft. Under a year-old program sponsored by the state Department of Corrections, nine students aged 13 to 18 are reconstructing the home and renovating the village while attending classes and group therapy sessions.

The 12-by-16-foot house was used as an office for the Whitesbog cranberry operation in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Owned by J.J. White, the berry farm was once the largest in the state and covered 3,000 acres off Route 530 near Browns Mills in Pemberton Township.

The house, considered the oldest in Whitesbog, was moved 1½ miles from the village in 1968 when Tom Darlington, a great-grandson of White, started a new cranberry farm in nearby Buffin's Meadows.

According to Darlington's wife, Martha, he moved the house for sentimental reasons. More than 10 years ago, Darlington studied in the house while working toward a master's degree in clinical psychology.

"I used it to get away from the office. I would go over there for

privacy; it had no telephone," Darlington said. "We called it the 'Little Red Schoolhouse.'"

Last spring, however, Darlington sent the tiny house back to the village on a flatbed truck, hoping that it would be restored to its original form.

Two months ago, that hope came to fruition.

Under the renovation program, nine students spend five days a week at the site, starting at 7 a.m., when they are picked up at their homes by one of three program supervisors.

Once at the village, they gather for a group therapy session that can last from one to five hours, according to Robin Josey, a social worker with the program.

"We've been known to stay until 11 p.m. dealing with an issue," he said.

During the sessions, the students discuss problems they are having at home or with each other, and they set goals for the day.

"The goals vary, but they are manageable," Josey said. "For example, coming in the next day with a better attitude. Or maybe, not to be so playful in school or on the job. The daily goals are something that should be accomplished in a day."

Josey said that if a majority of the students feel a member of the group is not making an effort to work out his problems, he is voted out of the program.

Following therapy, the students buckle on suede construction belts, fill the pockets with nails and start to work on the house.

"Most of them are to the point that we just let them go to it," said Brad Stewart, a youth worker who supervises the program's vocational tra-

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Neighbors

Twice every week, this section provides news about people, events, schools and governments in the Burlington County communities listed on the cover. This section is provided exclusively for South Jersey residents.

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"By the time these kids have reached us, they have abandoned all other alternatives. Here, we work on behavior, family life, offense history, schooling. . . . We try to get them as much as possible to deal with their own problems."

— Robin Josey, social worker

ing.

Working from a picture of the house taken 50 years ago, when the farm employed 660 people and was a staple of the Burlington County economy, the students have managed to recreate the simple architecture of the house.

"They enjoy it," Josey said, while two students scrambled to the roof to nail some shingles. "They even enjoy the thrill of putting on these carpenter's belts. It gives them a sense of self-worth. Some of them even talk about coming back to work on weekends."

The court-ordered program is one of several in the state, but it is one of the more intense.

"By the time these kids have reached us, they have abandoned all other alternatives," Josey said. "Here, we work on behavior, family life, offense history, schooling. . . . We try to get them as much as possible to deal with their own problems. It's a group effort."

"It's well-known that sending a kid straight to jail doesn't help much," Josey said. "It doesn't help as much as we can," he said.

Up on the roof, two students smile while Stewart instructs them on installing shingles. Although the roof is near completion, the students' ability to listen and follow instruction is still tested by Stewart.

Although Stewart is quite approachable, his control in the classroom is not to be reckoned with. His long stares easily squelch the smile of a wisecracking teenager.

The lesson for the day is the use of a circular saw, which sits unplugged on a small table in front of the room.

"If you're not feeling well because you've been out all night, I advise you not to use the tools," Stewart said, spurring a couple of the students to nudge each other. One student looks away, another looks down at cloth patches on his jacket emblazoned with the logo of a heavy metal group. Others hunch over their papers, taking meticulous notes.

Stewart ignores being ignored.

"If you are not feeling well, then you're not safe, then you're not out there with us," he said.

In the last year, students have performed landscaping work on the farm.

The Whitesbog settlement consists of 26 buildings, including worker housing, a general store, a schoolhouse and packing and storing houses. It was acquired by the state in 1966 as part of the Lebanon State Forest and is under the jurisdiction of the state Division of Parks and Forestry.

The state leased most of the buildings as offices to private organizations, but several buildings of historical and cultural significance were not leased and have deteriorated, according to a Whitesbog Preservation Trust study.

Over the 20 years that the farm has been out of operation, people from neighboring towns used the village

as a dumping ground, leaving old furniture and garbage beside its dirt roads and vandalizing the former workers' homes.

The students emptied the homes of garbage and furniture and boarded up the broken windows.

Michele Byers, special projects coordinator of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, said the old office building may be used as a visitors information center, and the other homes may be used as restaurants, hotels and an education center. Leases to the buildings belong to Darlington.

The Whitesbog study was submitted to the state Historical Commission last year, with the recommendation that the organization be allowed to take over active management of Whitesbog for a pilot period of 18 months and to begin planning its restoration.

No decision has been made on the study, said Byers, who added that she also hopes to have the village included on the National Register of Historical Landmarks.

The improvements to the village since the students began working there have been a welcome sight to the 18 residents of the village.

"I cannot say enough good things about them," said Sarah Orleans, whose front door is only a few feet from the house. "They are wonderful, wonderful people."

"You can't believe what the area looked like before," she said, while her 3-year-old daughter, Danielle, crawled into her lap.

Orleans said the house arrived at the village last spring and sat untouched until October. Materials were donated to the program by local contractor Edward Angioli, who also built the house's concrete footings.

"The students were really excited about doing it," Orleans said, "but they never knew about what they were restoring and the house's historical value."

Last week, her husband, David, a park naturalist, gave the class a presentation on the house and its origins and received a warm reception from the students.

"As soon as I saw the kids down here," Sarah Orleans said, "I saw that they have so much respect for the supervisors, for the people they work for. I feel like if my child plays outside, then I don't have to worry about her. It's really a good feeling that you're not alone in the village."

Sarah Orleans, who runs the Pine-lands Institute for Environmental Studies under the auspices of the Lebanon State Forest and Glassboro State College, said renovation of the house and landscaping of the village have motivated residents to work on their homes.

The restoration also seems to have motivated the students to work on their lives.

"I want to finish this program," said one of the students. "I want people to come here and say, 'Who made this so nice?' and someone will



Special to The Inquirer / DAN MILLER

Two boys check the level of a window frame; the site was once the state's largest cranberry farm

say, 'Kids who had problems came here and helped the place along.'"

"This is a lot more fun than regular school," said the student. "You don't get in much trouble here because there are less people and we all have to do a certain job."

"It makes me work harder, pounding nails, thinking about someone I hate," another student said, with a small laugh.

"Someone you dislike," corrected

the first student. "This program is about helping you with your problems, finding out what's causing you to do things. We come here and we have bad days here and there, but we don't hold that against one another."

"It's a non-contact program, so if we have a serious problem, we talk it out here and there," he said, motioning to the schoolhouse.

Both students said the program has helped them learn teamwork, com-

munication skills and responsibility.

At first, one of them said, they thought the program was made up of hard labor and nothing else.

"I heard about the program and I said, 'Sounds like the woods, back in the forest somewhere, chopping down trees,'" said a third student. "I thought I was going to be cutting wood all day."

"But it's new, it's an adventure," he said. "You can really see what you're doing."