



PHOTO BY DAVE TAYLOR

██████████ hug ██████████ as volunteers clean the Carbondale trailer the couple will soon call home.

Lending a Helping Hand

Project Compassion volunteers clean couple's new home

For ██████████ and ██████████ home has been a fleeting concept.

Having each grown up in households affected by addiction, and then having followed that same dark path of dependence, they found themselves living under a bridge in Carbondale, cooking their food on a trash can lid.

Now, through their own efforts and with help from Vine Community Church's Project Compassion program, the soon-to-be parents have found a place to call home.

"I got a call from ██████████ maybe four months ago that their family was in a situation, and we were fortunate enough to be able to assist," said Cavanaugh Gray, coordinator of Project Compassion, Vine Church's program for helping those in need.

Volunteers gathered April 22 at the Hanseman Street trailer the couple would soon call home to scrub it from top to bottom, end to end and to prepare the home for the family's new start.

"My husband and I, we've had a lot of help over the years, especially from people from our church rather than our family, and I know how important that is," said volunteer ██████████ as she scrubbed the bathroom sink.

"It's awesome to live out your faith and to help people," said volunteer ██████████.

And the church's outreach efforts were greatly appreciated, both with cleaning and helping in other ways.

"We are very thankful that they are putting this much effort into us," said ██████████, who is pregnant with the couple's child, due in July. "We would be struggling if not for the church."

"They have sheltered us and surrounded us with love and support," ██████████ added.

██████████ and ██████████ battled their way through addiction, which dragged them down literally to the street, sleeping under carports and bridges and with any family that would have them.

"A lot of the families do come with histories that we have to work through, whether it's job-related or any background things," Gray said. "We're trying to help them put that stuff in the past and look forward."

"It's just been an amazing journey, and our relationship has stayed strong throughout the whole thing," ██████████ said. "We've realized the closer we are to God, the better off we are."

"We want to give [the baby] a better chance than we had," ██████████ added. "We want to be sober parents, good parents, caring parents."

-Dave Taylor

**PHOTO BY DAVE TAYLOR**

Volunteer [REDACTED] wipes down a storm window outside beside the deck of the home.

Project Compassion helps those residents most in need

For those with a heart for people in need, Project Compassion offers a chance to help build relationships and rebuild lives.

The program, targeted at homeless families, offers everything from help with meals and transportation to help finding permanent housing housing, said Cavanaugh Gray, coordinator of the program.

“Nationwide homelessness is a huge problem,” he said. “It’s even a huge problem within the confines of Carbondale, you don’t even have to step outside of the area.”

That assistance doesn’t come without commitment, however, and families accepted into the program are required to do what they can and show progress.

“That usually means two weeks or so at an area hotel and then in that period we get enough people around them where we can act as a team,” Gray said. “The burden isn’t on one person, and we can just kinda step in where it’s needed.”

For more information on the project, or to serve, visit <http://www.vinecommunitychurch.com/project-compassion/> or contact Gray at 618.351.8463 ext. 115 or cgray@vinecommunitychurch.com

-Dave Taylor

**PHOTO BY DAVE TAYLOR**

Cavanaugh Gray sprinkles carpet deodorizer in the back bedroom of the couple’s new trailer. Gray leads Project Compassion, aimed at helping those in need.

**PHOTOS BY DAVE TAYLOR**

(Above) Volunteer [REDACTED] cleans a set of miniblinds in the hallway of the trailer. (Left) [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will share this trailer, on Hanseman Street, their first real home after having lived on the streets of Carbondale. “We’ve realized the closer we are to God, the better off we are,” [REDACTED] said.

