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Publish Date: 7/6/2009

## Teen volunteers enrich lives with Week of Hope

By Sarah Bultema  
Loveland Reporter-Herald

When youths from around the country arrived to Loveland last week, they didn't come to admire the sculptures or explore the Rockies.

Instead, they simply came to volunteer.

Week of Hope, created by the Group Workcamps Foundation, is a national missionary program that takes youths out of their comfort zone and into volunteer positions around the country — including Loveland.

Teens and preteens began arriving in Loveland for one-week stays about three weeks ago, and will continue for another month this summer.

"It's service for glorification of God ... and to build relationships with people they're working with," said Krista Edsall, a program coordinator.

Locally, the youths have been working at Hearts and Horses, as well as the Sterling House assisted living center — where they're finding just how rewarding volunteering can be.

"I like helping out and making a difference," said 17-year-old Elizabeth Bolin, who arrived June 28 from California. "It's been a really good experience."

She was one of four volunteers visiting with seniors Thursday at the Sterling House. They played a game of bowling, and the volunteers were there to pick up pins, keep score and cheer on the residents.

"They really like having us here because a lot of them don't get visitors," Bolin said. "And it's cool being with them and meeting different people."

Kim Villegas, life enrichment coordinator at the center, said the youths have been a great help with the residents.

"They bring an influx of energy and happiness," she said.

Yet Villegas has also seen just how much the youths can gain from the experience, too.

"They learn that old people can be fun," she said. "They still have a lot to share."

With fits of laughter from the group erupting louder than the clanking pins, it was clear that young and old were all happy for the arrangement.

"It's been a really, really good experience," said 15-year-old Dallas Jones. "I'm able to meet friends of an older age."

Eighty-six-year-old Barb Straw agreed.

"I admire that a bunch of kids would give up a week of their summer vacation to spend it with us," she said. "They are just great."

**ON THE NET:** For more information about Week of Hope, visit [www.groupworkcamps.com](http://www.groupworkcamps.com).



Reporter-Herald/Jenny Sparks  
Sam Sadoris, 12, left, plays a dice game called farkle with Sterling House resident Alice Garza and a group of other residents and volunteers Thursday at the Sterling House in Loveland. Sam, from Littleton, is a volunteer with Week of Hope, a national missionary program that takes youths out of their comfort zone and into volunteer positions around the country.

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