



Chelsea Guadagno, Morgan Conover, Madison Guadagno, and Tyler Conover, of Toms River, N.J., make friends with a horse while at the camp. Their parents were on site helping with the music for the week.



Three Springs Farm provides a sanctuary for teens and adults alike. Jeff Rush, camp manager, and his wife, Deanne, started Three Springs Ministries in the fall of 1984, fulfilling a lifelong dream of working with teens.

## Three Springs Farm Provides Valuable Space For Teens

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NAUVOO (Tioga County) — Peaceful calm in the center of teenage busyness is how one could describe the camp at Three Springs Farm where teenagers can come to retreat from the everyday pressures of their worlds, participate in Bible studies, and make new friends.

The farm is carved out of a 25-acre piece of rural Tioga County with a large mansion at its focal point. At first glance, the mansion rising up from the freshly mowed farm fields and horse pasture, seems out of place, almost like it was built for another time. In fact, it was built from 1914 to 1917 to house two families. But today, Jeff Rush uses every inch of the property, including the house and several outbuildings, for his ministry.

"This is something my wife and I always dreamed about doing before we were married," said Rush. "We worked with teenagers in our church as volunteer youth leaders. We loved working with kids and realized the value of getting kids out of their normal environment into a rural area where there's a lot of the distractions taken away."

Rush, although a native of Blooming Glen, Bucks County, knew about this area through his father's job with Hatfield. When he was young, he remembers coming up to the area and he continued his trips after getting married to Deanne, who was from nearby Dublin.

"When we were only married a year, I was up here hunting in 1983, and just happened to drive by the property, which was obviously abandoned. The grass was high and windows were broken out. I'm convinced that it was the Lord starting to click some thoughts saying that this was a great place to do what we wanted to do," said Rush.

So, he made an appointment with Abe Clemens, who owned

the property, and told him about his plans. After several weeks, Clemens gave the nod, and Three Springs Ministries was born.

"(The property) needed a lot of work to get it to the point where we could use it. Initially we were just looking at using the house," said Rush.

When the house was ready, the doors were opened for the first groups of people.

"Really our first small retreat groups that we had would have been in the fall of 1984. That's when we began with groups of 15-24 on weekends," said Rush.

The first weeklong camp was in the summer of 1985, which had three campers making the trip to the farm.

Now almost every weekend from September through May and the week-long summer camps are filled to capacity. Youth groups, family groups, and even senior citizen Sunday School classes are among frequent visitors to the camp. "Probably about 75 percent of the whole ministry that we do in the course of a year is to teenagers. That's by design," said Rush.

Three Springs Ministries had a long term lease agreement with the Clemens family, to use the facility, but recently they were happy to receive the deed to the property.

"The Clemens family deeded over to the ministry 25 acres. Over the years we've put a lot of sweat equity as well as money into the place and we had a long term lease agreement, but Mr. Clemens is now 85 years old and he wanted to make sure things continued. He was thrilled to see what was happening. There are about 2,000 kids going through here each year," explained Rush.

Three Springs is starting a year-long program for college age interns, adding to an already busy schedule.

As the number of campers increased, so did the need for more usable space, so the workers

began renovating the outbuildings, trying to keep as much original detail as possible.

The first floor of the mansion is now devoted entirely to dining and kitchen areas. Currently they can seat 65-70 diners at a time. The second story and the recently remodeled third floor provides sleeping areas.

"There are seven bedrooms on the second floor. In the house alone, we can sleep 55 people," said Rush.

In 1995, workers tore apart a 100-year-old horse barn and used

the timbers to construct a building simply called, "the barn." The first floor offers ample space for worship and other organized activities in an auditorium, while the second floor houses a large game room and snack bar area. On the third floor loft, campers can curl up in a corner with a book or find a comfortable spot to chat with friends. Another building that now sleeps 11 campers has a kitchen space and living area, which was once a hog stable.

"We tell the kids when they

come that they'll be staying in the pig stable, but that does not give them permission to act like pigs!" Rush said with a laugh. "But needless to say, sometimes they don't need permission!" Yet another outbuilding that was once the summer kitchen still sports the large stone fireplace in the center. Today they call it the summerhouse and 12 campers can sleep in the building.

Backpack weeks, horse back weeks, mountain bike camps, (Turn to Page B7)



Campers enjoy a game of football in the field in front of the mansion that was the original building for the camp. Over the years, the workers have remodeled the mansion and outbuildings to accommodate their needs.



Behind the main house stand several outbuildings including a small barn they call "the stable", which not too many years ago housed live pigs and now serves as housing for campers. The remodeled barn, right, holds 23 horses that are used for trail rides throughout the summer.