

Teens experience life in the Third World

By BEN DUMMETT
Herald Staff

It has been an unusual summer for three young Halton Hills women.

Sheri Harms, 19, and Sheri Mann, 18, both of Georgetown and Alison Mulder, 19, of Limehouse left behind their relatively secure lives here and embarked on a journey to the Third World to experience life not as a tourist but as community members.

Ms. Harms and Ms. Mann lived among the Lahu tribe in the mountain village of Maekoon in Thailand where, along with several other teenagers, they helped build a non denominational church during the month of July and the first week of August. Ms. Mulder lived in Cabudare, Venezuela where she also participated with a team of young people to help build a church.

The three, who are recent graduates of Georgetown District High School, were part of Teen Mission International, an American based organization founded to provide young people with the opportunity to experience missionary life. They were introduced to the group through their church here in Georgetown, the Georgetown Christian Missionary Alliance Church.

Of the Lahu people both Ms. Harms and Ms. Mann said they were "very friendly. They were willing to do so much for us and they expected nothing in return," Ms. Mann said.

Although the villagers had no plumbing system they built one specifically for the new arrivals.

Out of bamboo chutes they built a series of pipes allowing the group to direct the village water supply to a makeshift kitchen shower and outhouse, Ms. Mann explained.

But the villagers' generosity didn't stop there. "When the group needed supplies they were willing to make the necessary five hour hike," she said.

Ms. Harms and Ms. Mann first flew to Bangkok where they then took a seven-hour taxi-ride to Thang Mai and then hiked three hours into the mountains to Maekoon.

About 50 people live in the village where they stayed - half were Christian, Ms. Harms said.

Ms. Mulder echoed her friend's sentiments in describing the friendliness she encountered in Cabudare, saying the children she met always wanted to be hugged.

Cabudare is a small village about seven hours outside of Caracas, the Venezuelan capital.

A full day of laying down foundations was how the three spent their weekdays. Ms. Harms and Ms. Mann also helped build the frame and in roof.

A Thai translator was used during the shows put on for the children of Lahu while a Spanish translator was used during the shows in Cabudare.

Although the children were

places they saw, they agreed not to lead of life of poverty. "In Cabudare six to eight people shared a one-room house. People were pretty thin looking, and the animals were even scrawny," Ms. Mulder said.

Building a church in the Third World is a completely different endeavor than building one here, they said.

The foundations required digging 32-foot holes and then installing wire frames so that cement columns could be installed, Ms. Mulder explained. The process of framing, which is called steel tying, was tedious and difficult, she

committal. They did, however, say they would do the trip again.

Mainly Canadians and Americans made up the groups in Maekoon and Cabudare. Teens who get involved in the teen missionary organization can choose between 42 different Third World countries, Ms. Mulder said.

Although the three worked on a church they say the type of work varies.

The organizations accept all denominations, Ms. Mulder said.

All participants attend a "primitive jungle camp" at Merritt, Florida for two weeks to prepare for the awaiting culture shock.

The camp which is put on by Teen Missionary International

simulates the Third World experience, Ms. Mulder said.

In the two countries, there was no running water. Only canned food was available. Showers were non-existent. They bathed in wooden buckets that they filled with their hands.

When they weren't enjoying the finer things in life they took carpentry and brick laying and steel tying classes. Evenings were spent learning how to witness non-Christians and sing-a-longs.

Upon their return they attended a debriefing camp to prepare for their return to western life. "We were told to expect to feel frustration when we saw how we live when others are sick or looking for their next meal," Ms. Mann said.



Sheri Harms (left), Alison Mulder and Sheri Mann show off some of the souvenirs they recently brought back from their trip to the Third World. Ms. Harms and Ms. Mann picked up the Coca Cola T-shirts while in Maekoon, Thailand. Alison Mulder or should we say Senorita Mulder brought back her poncho from Cabudare, Venezuela. The three Halton Hills residents were part of a trip organized by Teen Mission International. (Herald photo)

unable to communicate their feelings about the entertainment, the three agreed that the children's smiles and hugs showed they enjoyed what they saw.

Ms. Mulder said the inability to communicate made it difficult to really get to know the people. It was easier to relate to the young children because they were the least inhibited, she said.

Ms. Mann and Ms. Harms used food to break through the communication barrier. One night they made some popcorn, but initially the children were reluctant to try it but when they eventually did, they couldn't stop. "We ended up making popcorn the rest of the night," they said.

About the people they met and

said. They had to do without the specific steel tying tool relying on plyers and their hands, she said. This was also true for mixing the cement. Cement mixers were non-existent, Ms. Mulder said.

As part of their trips, the three visited nearby churches and put on puppet shows for children during the weekends. The shows centred around different bible stories or a moral message, they said.

For the three, the trip was a way of learning about another culture and teaching that culture about their own, they said.

The trip also allowed them to see if missionary work is something they'd like to pursue later in life. But when asked if they made any decisions, they were non-

Halton will pay \$840,000 to redesign Milton Centennial Manor

Halton Region will pay an Oakville firm \$840,000 to redesign Halton Centennial Manor - a Region-run home for seniors, located in Milton.

The Ontario Ministry of Health recently allocated \$6.5 million for the first phase of the manor's redesign. The first phase calls for the reduction of 375 beds to 200 beds at the Ontario Street South manor.

Mekinda, Snyder and Weis Inc. Architects from Oakville won a contract with the Region to redesign the building.

Halton will use one of three plans to redesign Halton Centennial

Manor. One option is to build 150 institutional bed facility on the Milton site and demolish the Pettit House on-site. This plan would involve and renovate the Martin House to accommodate 50 beds.

A second option would be to retain the Martin House for community services, administration, seniors day care, child care and to build 200 extended care residences around the Martin House.

The third option facing the Region is to build a completely new facility for 200 residents.

The three solutions to redesigning Halton Manor will be reviewed by the Region.

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