

## Message From The President

Hello to all members and friends. 2025 is here and I am very hopeful that it will be a great year for the Society. I am looking forward to new things this year. Our membership currently stands at 24 members and I hope that those of you that haven't renewed your membership yet will do so soon. I am also hoping to attract new members by having more presentations at the Museum. We just wrapped up a successful GoFundMe fundraiser which raised \$1,000.00 to purchase an overhead scanner so that we can begin to preserve some of our documents digitally and hopefully get them up on the internet in some searchable fashion so that you can do research from home, at your convenience. We don't have the scanner yet but I will be ordering it very soon. Follow the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society and the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum Facebook page for updates. The cost of our website, [swhistoric.org](http://swhistoric.org), just doubled. It seems that WIX, who hosts it, has decided to recategorize us which places us into a higher tier. The GoFundMe fundraiser came just in the nick of time because it will pay for most of the cost of the overhead scanner and the increase in the web hosting. All of our funding comes from membership dues and donations only so I can't tell who how important it is to keep your dues current and make a donation when and if you are able. It is ALWAYS greatly appreciated. The Main Street project in Sussex Borough has been completed and it looks great! Brand new [avers and freshly paved road with new stripes. It's a one way now going south between Newton Avenue and Harrison Street. Several more parking spaces have been added with the addition of more diagonal parking. I had a hopeful call recently from someone who showed interest in moving the 1906 T.J. Dunn fountain. That is all that I will say about that for now because I have been let down before so I don't want to get our hopes up to high on it. Stay tuned though. Maybe this time around it will happen. I'll leave you with a reminder that the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum at 37 Main Street in Sussex Borough is open every Sunday from 12PM—3PM. Stop in and say hi. I would love to see you and to show you around. Happy New Year. I wish all of you health, wealth and prosperity in the year ahead.  
Mario

**2024 Annual Meeting  
Held  
Sunday, May 19, 2024  
2025 Annual  
Meeting date TBD.**

### In This Issue

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The following article was written by Sussex-Wantage Historical Society member Irene 'Pat' Gilman. She is in her nineties and spent some of her early childhood growing up in Quarryville.

### **Biographic**

**information:** Irene "Pat" Gilman, granddaughter of Peter Lott, Unionville Farmer Poet, daughter of Charles and Jane L. Gilman, and sister of Margaret Checkur, lived in Quarryville from 1935 until 1942 when her family moved to 82 Lott Road, in Dunnvale. For over fifty years, she taught English in Highland Park, NJ, Istanbul, and Tokyo and then ESL at Fordham University. Now retired, she enjoys the pleasures of being a senior citizen in Manhattan.

## **Quarryville—Memories of a Childhood**

**by Irene 'Pat' Gilman**

When people ask me where I spent my childhood, I say my first three years were in Brooklyn. Then we moved to northwestern New Jersey where there were more cows than people - more specifically, Quarryville. You won't find Quarryville on a map. According to AI, it's an unincorporated locality in Wantage Township in Sussex County. But there is no sign, Quarryville is one of several localities in Wantage Township, each getting its name from its one room school.

In 1829, the first Wantage school committee divided the township into districts. By 1833, the Pond School, its first, was established. The charge was one dollar per student. By 1936, over 19 one-room schools, now free, served the township. They were sometimes named for the farmer who had donated the land such as Dunnvale or Beemerville; others for a stream that supplied power for a saw or grist mill. In fact, Quarryville had a slate quarry. Wolfpit School got its name from an actual pit, dug, and filled with bait by farmers to entice hungry wolves who had feasted on their livestock. Once the wolves were in the pit, the farmers shot them, collecting their tails for the bounty paid to rid the township of these predators. When there were not enough students to warrant a school remaining open, it was combined with another, making the daily walks longer for some.

Quarryville is located off Route 284, beginning at Rose Marrow Road. But when Quarryville first existed and until after World War II, none of the roads had names. You went on Route.284, running between Sussex, NJ and Unionville, NY, until you came to the Wayside Garage. If you drove past it and the Harden farm, consisting of a large barn, two white houses, one small and one large with an unpainted wagon house in between, then you have gone too far. To get to the heart of what was once Quarryville, make a left turn at the garage, follow the road to make a 90 degree turn to the right, then make another 90 degree turn to the left. Go straight until you reach a small hump in the road that was once a railroad crossing.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this railroad, once owned by the Midland Blue Stone Company, was used to transport its high-grade slate to New York City and other growing municipalities. Up the long hill from the railroad crossing, are the remnants of the entries to these quarries. (There is an actual road, now called Quarry, which ran northeast all the way to the New York State border at Unionville. But the original way to the quarries is now overgrown with pastures and trees)

Near the Quarryville station on the Midland Railway (which later became the NY Susquehanna and Western Railroad) was a general store, a post office (1876-1919), and a Horton and Lewis Creamery. D.H.Slauson, a local farmer, used this train to ship his branded tubs of butter to New York City.

# Quarryville—Memories of a Childhood continued.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Quarryville's population was 64. In addition to transporting slate and milk, prior to 1915, the train also served as a means to get to Sussex High School. (From 1915 to 1922, a horse drawn wagon or sleigh served as transportation.) My mother and the few others who went beyond 8<sup>th</sup> grade walked a couple of miles to board the train at 6:45 AM and return at 6:45 PM. Then they walked back home. The train was still running in the early thirties. As a child, I could hear the train whistle as it went through Quarryville. In 1899, Nestles opened a competing creamery in the village of Unionville, NY, closer for many farmers. Horton and Lewis ended operating and sold its building in 1934. With the end of Prohibition in 1933, it was ready to become the Sussex County Distillery, famous for its High Point Apple Jack. Unfortunately, the building burned in 1948. Finally, the trains fell silent. In 1959, the railroad ties and tracks were salvaged. Now the roadbed serves as a recreation walking/dirt bike trail. Rural mail delivery routes were established. The store was no longer needed when its customers had cars to shop elsewhere. At first, my parents rented the smaller of the two Harden houses. It was conveniently near the Union one room school, on what is now Possum Road, where my mother was teaching. My father, working for the New York City Department of Health, came home on weekends. My grandparents and aunts lived close by. – fortunately, because no day-care centers existed in the thirties. When my sister, Peg, was too ill to go to her second-grade class, in Sussex, Aunt Ethel Kirk, who lived nearby, took care of her. As she recuperated, Howdy, one of her teenage sons, helped her make a doll's quilt.

Although I was too young to go to school, spending mid-week with my grandparents, occasionally, I would go to my mother's school. Because of the Depression, the government sent crackers, big tubs of peanut butter and large cans of soup, usually vegetable. My mother would heat the soup on an electric hot plate; at lunch time, each of her students would line up to get a cup of hot soup and a saltine decorated with a big glop of peanut butter. Raising money through raffling off a donated quilt, turkeys and geese enabled my mother to rent a bus for a field trip. With my father's help, the entire school went to New York City, to visit Coney Island. On seeing the Atlantic Ocean for the first time, one girl said, "Boy, Mrs. Gilman, that sure is a big lake!" On the way home, the bus drove through the heart of Broadway to see the bright lights. Too full of hot dogs, ice cream, and soda and excitement, one of the students leaned out a window and christened Broadway. Many of these students had never dreamed of traveling outside of Wantage.

In 1937, The Wantage Consolidated School opened. The one-room schools were closed and sold at auction. The Quarryville school sat at the top of the hill, where the current Rose Marrow and Peter Lott Roads meet. Wanting to buy it, my father was not daunted by the work needed to make it livable. However, at the auction, B.D. Simmons, a local feed dealer, won the bid. He lowered the ceiling and created three bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, dining room, living room, and staircases going to the cellar and attic. He also installed a septic system, dug a well. Except for adding some windows and a new front and back door, the building looked just like it had when it was a school. A large concrete platform with four crumbling steps on all three sides served as the front porch. Fortunately, my parents were able to rent it for \$20.00 a month, five dollars more expensive than the Harden house. We moved away from a very busy corner.

Unfortunately, my father discovered some creatures, squirrels, mice, or rats, had taken residence in our basement before we got there. He evicted them by plugging all the holes in the cellar, save one, into which he inserted a hose, the other end he attached to the exhaust pipe of his car and then started the engine. With the invaders gone, we could move in. The cellar housed a coal furnace and small "pot" stove that heated water not only for the kitchen and bathroom, but also water for our electric washing machine, an open tub with an agitator. It stood next to a big deep utility sink that was used for rinsing. I remember, the ringer was automatic and, more than once, my fingers were in danger of being caught as I helped my mother feed laundry through its two rollers.

# Quarryville—Memories of a Childhood, continued.

It could painfully squeeze your fingers if you were not careful. In winter, when we could not hang clothes outside, we used drying racks inside the cellar. Steps led directly outside so in good weather, my mother did not have to carry wet clothes into the kitchen and then outdoors again.

Aside from a new refrigerator, my parents also invested in a combination propane/wood/coal stove. This stove also provided supplementary heat. One winter, Aunt Edith, my mother's eldest sister, stayed with us; she fired up our kitchen stove to the point that the metal chimney turned red hot, alarming us all. Used to old-fashioned cast-iron stoves, she did not trust central heating!

The attic was only about four or five feet tall. The paint on the original ceiling flaked and peeled, but after my father laid some plywood to prevent my sister or me falling through the ceilings of our new rooms, it was a great place to play. I could stand on the attic steps and spend an endless afternoon rearranging the furniture in our two-story six-room dollhouse that my father had built, and my mother had decorated. Later, I graduated to paper dolls: Hedy Lamar, Tyrone Power and all of the characters and exquisite clothes from *Gone with the Wind*.

In back of the schoolhouse was a triangular wood lot of about three acres, a great place to play and never to be out of sight of home. A small brook ran over some rocks creating a waterfall – not much in the summer, but in the winter, the water froze enough so if your backside was protected by a big piece of cardboard, it became a great slide. The stream ran in the back of our property off to the right, then under the road. My father, using large rocks – of which there were many- created a small pond, large enough to wet your bottom, but it soon became home to some beautiful ducks. To keep them company, he built a small coop, large enough to house enough chickens to supply us with eggs and meat, but also to sell the surplus to others. I don't remember being assigned any chores, other than going for milk. I would be given a metal two-quart pail with a very secure top and a wire handle and told to go up the hill to get milk. The farm stood where the now Rose Marrow and Sally Harden Roads meet. My parents also rented a plot of land on that farm so they could plant a vegetable garden. The earth around the schoolhouse, what little there was, was hard like cement.

Near that crossroad, the Delaney's lived in a small house, with a son, Delmar, my age. We rode the school bus together. Playmates, other than those at school, were scarce. Sometime after we moved in, Delmar came down the hill, looking for a friend. At seven, I fear I was not kind or hospitable. I wanted none of him and chased him back up the hill!

Winters in Quarryville were cold and wet; when snow filled the roads, schools were closed. One winter, there was so much snow that my sister and I constructed a huge mound higher than our heads. We packed it until it was solid. Then we hollowed out the inside so we could make an igloo. We cut a small window on one side. Whenever we got snowed in, my mother would make doughnuts. We used the greased paper on which she placed the cooked doughnuts as our "pane of glass." An ancient scratchy double sided velour carriage robe served as our floor covering. Happy with our construction, we sat inside eating fresh warm sugared doughnuts. I don't think our igloo lasted very long, but the memory of doing something very pleasant with my older sister did last. Sometimes, if we were in town when a storm started, we had to leave our car at the bottom of the hill and walk home. We would trudge through a snow-covered field, carrying our groceries, because it was less icy than the road. Once one of the paper bags split and our oranges disappeared. My determined mother made certain her daughters recovered all of them.



# Quarryville—Memories of a Childhood, continued.

Summers were spent riding our bikes. Going down hills was more fun than pushing the bike back to the top for another thrilling ride. My sister had three speeds, but I had only one. Braking on gravel roads led to falls and skinned up knees that turned pink after being disinfected with methanolate. On very hot weekends, a special delight was riding in the rumble seat in my father's roadster to go swimming in Clove Lake. No seat belts then. Another way to cool off was to sit on the cool High Point granite monument and wait for a breeze.

At least once a summer, Aunt Sadie Wood, another of my mother's sisters, made homemade ice cream. Their farm had an icehouse. In a big barrel, shaved ice and salt were packed around a gallon steel tub filled with a simple mixture of cream, sugar, and flavoring. The tub also contained a dasher attached to a crank that had to be turned by hand, slowly at first and then as the mixture started to freeze, then faster. The adults took turns on the churn handle. As children, our job was to lick clean the ice cream coated dasher.

In good weather, my mother took me and my sister, with Aunt Ethel Kirk, to pick black caps found on the old quarry site. One for my basket and one for my mouth. In spite of the thorns and stained fingers, we gathered enough to ensure that we had jam for the winter. Aunt Ethel's small farm on Lower Unionville Road bordered on the Walkill River. She walked with the three of us to catch "sunnies" or, if we were lucky, catfish: our bait - fish worms and huge "night crawlers" found under dried cow flops - threaded our hooks; a cork on our line to tell us if we had a bite; our poles - two-piece bamboo that might separate if the weight of our catch proved too heavy. Even if it started to rain, we stayed when the fish were biting. The highlight of my Quarryville childhood was the playhouse my father built. In 1938, still working for the city division of the NYC Department of Health, he was living during the week in Flushing, Queens, next to what would become the site of the 1939 World's Fair. The many treasures to be exhibited came packed in large wooden crates. Ever resourceful, my father salvaged the discarded wood, loading it on the top of his car to take to our home in Quarryville. Using it as the basis, he built a 9x12 playhouse with a peaked roof. Painted white, its seven windows were decorated with green shutters. Inside, at one end, was a small sink with shelves on either side for our miniature dishes. A small table and two chairs and a day bed on the linoleum rug were added. Using scrap wood, my father cut silhouettes of the seven dwarfs. When painted, they, along with two rows of whitewashed stones, lined the path to our little house. I don't remember Snow White being part of the group.

While we lived in Quarryville, my father also made certain we were introduced to New York City's many treasures and pleasures: the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Natural History, Coney Island Steeplechase, the Barnum and Bailey/Ringling Brothers Circus in the old Madison Square Garden, I remember we came home with a huge metal ring that fit the finger of a giant in the side show. It was so large that I could insert four of my childhood fingers.

## **Sussex-Wantage Historical Society**

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**Mario Poggi - President/Secretary**

**Robert Holowach - VP/Treasurer**

**Russ Eaton - VP**

# Quarryville—Memories of a Childhood, Continued

Seeing the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and Rockefeller Center's Christmas tree were special treats. Once the wind took my hat under the tree; in retrieving it, my father brought back a large piece of celluloid, part of a broken bulb from the decorations. After the Parade, we were taken to Macy's to see Santa Claus, look at all the toys, and make one wish for Christmas. One year, my sister and I got large dolls with wigs, so large they took size 12-month baby clothes.

Our many trips to the 1939 World's Fair frequently included our cousin, Charlotte Mann, and my grandfather, Peter Lott. Once, one of my father's friends loaned us his small cabin cruiser anchored in Flushing Bay to use overnight. prior to going to the Fair. Once there, we were introduced to an early version of a television set, diamond cutting, the manufacturing of rubber tires, miniature cups of Heinz's baked beans, Billy Rose's Aquacade, and a vision of the future with its multiple superhighways weaving in and out of each other. My sister and I caught a glimpse of Princess Elizabeth and her sister Margaret in their carriage as they visited the Fair. In one exhibit, you could make an individual 78 recording: my grandfather recited his poem, "My Escape from the Pochuck Witches," and my sister sang "On the Good Ship Lollipop.

One Fair pleasure we were denied as children occurred when my father introduced our grandfather to the pleasures of Sally Rand and her fans. For these family excursions, my mother always carried a large woven wicker basket with two covers, one side contained fruit and the other, cheese and mustard sandwiches. My father, always mindful of spoiled food, never let us eat mayonnaise salads unless they came straight from a fridge.

My Quarryville childhood ended in 1942 when we moved to my grandparents' farm, 87 Lott Road, which is technically in Dunnvale..

We took the playhouse with us.

Wow, what great memories. I'm sure that many of you may have at one time or another driven or walked on Lott Road in Wantage. That road was named after Irene's grandfather. He was quite a poet. He had many of his poems published in the Wantage Recorder newspaper, starting around 1916 Peter Lott's compiled poems were published in book form in 1983 by Jane L. Fleming and Irene P. Gilman titled 'The Collected Poems of Peter Lott, Unionville Farmer Poet' There is a copy in the reference section of the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum for anyone who may be interested in reading some of his poetry.

In her article, Irene speaks of her parents. As she mentioned in her biography at the beginning of the article, her mom was Jane Gilman. For those of you who research our local area, I'm sure that like me, you have all used 'Our Wantage Heritage' from time to time in that research. Jane Gilman was a co-editor of that book, along with Lawrence King. In 1985, Jane Gilman was honoured by the then Sussex-Wantage Chamber of Commerce as the Senior Citizen of the Year.

The following page has that original announcement and article which appeared in the 1985 Sussex Day program.



## Sussex-Wantage Chamber of Commerce

Presents

**Mrs. Jane Gilman**

*Senior Citizen of the Year*

Jane L. Gilman taught a total of 42 years. After retiring from full-time teaching, she continued to work as a substitute teacher for ten years. Her first school was the Wolf Pit School in 1920. Mrs. Gilman did not know that it had the reputation of being the worst school in the township. Mr. McBride, President of the Board, arrived at the school on opening day in September. He tied his horse to the hitching post and came into the school with a switch. He said, "Put this over the blackboard and use it if you have to." She never took it down the whole year. She found that if you went out and played with the children, you would avoid trouble. Her salary was \$90.00 a month. Each day, she walked six miles round trip.

Her next school was Dunnvale, 1921-1923. In this school she taught nieces, nephews and second cousins. She knew the parents of the rest of the children. Her salary here was \$80.00 a month because the children were better behaved. As a rural school teacher, she found herself to be not only the teacher, but mother, nurse and janitor as well. There were no mid-year or spring vacations or days off for Lincoln's or Washington's birthdays.

She was in the Sussex School system for four years, 1923-27. From 1927-28 she taught in the New York state system at the Pine Knot School. From 1929-1936 Mrs. Gilman lived in Brooklyn, NY, where her husband was a food inspector for the City of New York. In 1936 she came back to this School. The reason that she came back to teaching dealt with the fact that she had hospital and doctor bills to pay. The Great Depression was not over.

In 1937 when the rural schools of Wantage were consolidated, she started teaching at the Wantage Consolidated School where she taught until 1966. She taught at the Sussex School from 1967 until 1970 when she retired from full-time teaching.

Mrs. Gilman has had a tremendous influence on the youth of this area of Sussex and Wantage. She is the matriarch of a large and extended family including two daughters, Margaret Gilman Checkur and Irene Gilman, and four foster children. The foster children include Richard Nemeth, David Payne, Janice McCullum Mattson and Diane McCullum Klause. She also made a temporary home for three other boys and one girl.

Mrs. Gilman was a pioneer in the realm of taking students on field trips outside of the area. She thought it was important for her students to experience something of the outside world. Some of her students had never seen the Atlantic Ocean until Mrs. Gilman took them on a class trip. She has supplied people with pictures and information on our local area and has become a rich source of first-hand information about the history of our town. At the time of the Bicentennial, Mrs. Gilman served as the Township Historian and helped to write a book on the history of the area. She has also served as tour leader for trips on the Old Mine Road. Mrs. Gilman sometimes assists Sussex-Wantage teachers by taking students to the one-room school house in Vernon and showing them what it was like to teach and learn in a one-room school house.

Mrs. Gilman is a member of the Retired Teacher's Association, the Historical Society, The Over Fifty Club of Unionville and Sussex, and the Unionville Presbyterian Church. Wantage honored her by making her Senior Citizen of the Year in 1976. She was also given the Clifton E. Lawrence Outstanding American Award by the Kiwanis Club. Recently Mrs. Gilman, with the help of her daughters and grandchildren, published a collection of poems by her father, The Unionville Farmer Poet, Peter Lott.

Recently she took her grand-daughter, Tanya, for a ride to show her where she was born and where she went to school. As she spoke about how she had spent her first twelve years, Tanya said, "Please write this all down for me." With the help of Tanya, Mrs. Gilman has started to write her memoirs.





Lawrence King & Jane Gilman - Our Wantage Heritage Editors - Photo Mikrut - 3-19-77

## Rankin's Deckertown Classical Academy

Born in 1796 in Greene County, Tennessee, William Rankin taught in several different states. A man of very rough appearance he often surprised those that he met of his knowledge of Latin, Greek and many other cultures. He married Sally Martin of Sussex County. In the fall of 1833, he wanted to establish a school in Deckertown. This proved to be very difficult as he couldn't find a suitable place or building for it. Finally, he rented a small building from a local tavern owner. It was one room, but it would be the beginning of a school of Scholars. Among the first students were John A. Whittaker who would go on to become a lawyer and was the son of John A. Whittaker, president of the Farmer's National Bank. Lydia and Anna Allen, the daughters of the very prominent Dr. Allen. The school subsequently was moved to Mill Street as part of the house owned by William Mann, Deckertown's most predominant black resident and descendant of a slave. By the next spring over 20 scholars attended the school. The school began to gain fame and recognition and so scholars from near and far came to attend it. This dwelling now becoming too small, Rankin ended up purchasing the Presbyterian church on the hill to become the new home for his school. From 1836 through 1842 or so, he gained a great reputation for his teaching there. In 1842 he sold the school to the Deckertown School District, No. 92 of Wantage Township. He moved to Amity and then later established a school in Mendham, NJ. He died while instructing a class of his students in Senophon's Anabasis of apoplexy on May 10, 1876. Almost a very fitting way for a man who loved to teach, to die, while teaching, but surely horrific for his students. His funeral and internment took place in Mendham, NJ. William Rankin, dubbed the "Educator of Sussex" is truly a legend of Deckertown. The property that this school stood on was later used for the Sussex Public School, built in 1904.

# Museum Spotlight

## “The Centennial Clock”

Every newsletter, starting now and going forward, I will be putting a ‘spotlight’ on a particular item in the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum.



This clock was handmade by Louis Molinari around 1955. It commemorates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Newark State Teacher’s College, today’s Kean University, which was founded in 1855. Louis was a high school teacher of the industrial arts and graduated from the Newark State Teacher’s College. This clock stood in the Friar Mountain Model Railroad Museum since it opened in Sparta in 2006. The Museum was co-owned by Louis and his wife Wendy Molinari. It officially closed its doors in July of 2024 and Wendy Molinari donated this clock to the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society on October 25, 2024. It will stand in the Sussex-Wantage Historical Society Museum as a legacy of the creativity and hard work that Louis and Wendy Molinari put into the building and operating of the Friar Mountain Model Railroad Museum and especially the joy that they brought to the thousands of visitors that went there. It also stands as a testament to one of New Jersey’s great Universities and the history of our great state.



**SUSSEX-WANTAGE**  
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**2025 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP (JANUARY 1, 2025 THRU  
DECEMBER 31, 2025)**

**CURRENTLY MEMBERSHIP TO THE SUSSEX-WANTAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS  
\$10.00 (PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK OUT TO SUSSEX-WANTAGE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY AND MAIL TO THE ADDRESS ABOVE OR APPLY ONLINE AT  
[WWW.SWHISTORIC.ORG](http://WWW.SWHISTORIC.ORG) TO PAY BY CREDIT CARD USING PAYPAL)**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT IS/WAS YOUR OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU HAVE ANY HOBBIES \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT INTERESTS YOU MOST ABOUT HISTORY \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE OUR MEETINGS TO INCLUDE \_\_\_\_\_

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO BE A VOLUNTEER ON ONE OF OUR PROJECTS - Y N