

HELPING HANDS



14-year-old Domenick Gaspasso, Pat Olson and John Grant join other St. Jerome parishioners as they repair a home on Wake Robin Road in Norwalk as part of the AmeriCares annual Homefront Day.

Hour photos / ERIK TRAUTMANN

Volunteers renovate homes during annual event

NORWALK

By **LAUREN MYLO**
Hour Staff Writer

The home a 90-year-old woman has lived in for more than half of her life received a makeover Saturday courtesy of volunteers from St. Jerome Parish.

The 30 people from St. Jerome made up one of 116 teams who renovated 94 homes and community centers this month as part of AmeriCares annual HomeFront Day, which offers free repairs for low-income homeowners.

The Norwalk homeowner benefiting from St. Jerome's work was Ariane McHale. Her friend, Jeanne Tarrant, spoke on her behalf.

"Being 90, it was a little bit difficult for her to fathom that this could happen," said Tarrant. "She was so touched that all these people were there helping her. . . She kept saying to me, 'we have to write and thank them.'"

The homeowners must



Joe Chetta joins other St. Jerome parishioners as they refurbish a home on Wake Robin Road in Norwalk. The 30 people from St. Jerome made up one of 116 teams who renovated 94 homes and community centers this month.

apply to be considered for renovation. Beneficiaries include senior citizens, disabled residents and single parents.

The volunteers at McHale's house were painting the inside and outside walls, installing safety railings in the shower and widening the bathroom door so McHale could enter more easily with her walker.

Inside, Vito Gasparro was in the bathroom installing a light fixture with his son Domenick,

using his expertise as an employee of ConEdison Solutions. Domenick was volunteering as part of his confirmation preparation.

Outside, a group had finished raking the backyard and was scraping the house before repainting it.

"When you're doing this stuff at home, you feel very morose about it," said Frank Silbi, 15, who was working with friends Matt and Michael King. "But when you're

out here doing something for the community, you feel like you're doing something that helps."

Bramwell "Woody" Wood, who was in charge of the group, said it was extra special for St. Jerome because McHale, who was a well-know children's portrait painter under the name Ariane Beigneux, is a parishioner.

"Everybody seems to really get a lot of out of it," said Wood. "It's a very fulfilling day for everyone."

Twenty-two of this year's projects were in the greater Stamford area. Other Norwalk teams were from Affinion, FactSet Research Systems, the Norwalk Hospital, the Norwalk United Methodist Church, the Organization of Chinese Americans and the Synapse Group, Inc.

Since 1988, AmeriCares has helped more than 2,300 low-income families stay in their homes.