

Habitat build takes couple on South American journey

BY JOHN CURRY

One trip with two memorable experiences.

That's what William and Mary Passmore relayed at a presentation at St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville on Sunday, Jan. 27.

It was last October when the Stittsville couple visited two countries in South America, each with a different purpose.

In Peru, they visited a recognized wonder of the world while in Bolivia, they helped build a home for a family needing help.

Interpreting a series of photos projected on the church's video screen, William told of their journey on the Inca trail hike to Machu Picchu in Peru, followed by a Habitat Global Village project in Bolivia.

The Inca trail hike, involving a group of about 15 people, started outside Cusco, the historic Inca capital of Peru.

The group engaged porters who each carried 60 pound of tents and food on their backs, allowing the travelers to go with just lighter day packs.

The benefit of the porters was evident on just the first night on the trail when the porters erected the tents in a valley setting and then served a three-course dinner to the hikers.

It took four days and three



John Curry photo

Mary and William Passmore (left) are with Donna and Marc Caron (right) at the presentation on their Habitat Global Village trip to Bolivia and their hike to Machu Picchu in Peru at St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville on Sunday, Jan. 27. Marc Caron was the Habitat Global Village project leader.

nights to complete the hike to Machu Picchu, covering 58 kilometers.

The most distance covered in any one day was 19 kilometers as travel was challenging with lots of ups and downs in the terrain.

In addition, the high altitude and thin air necessitated a slow pace. Indeed, the end of the trail near Machu Picchu is so steep that some had to climb on their hands and knees.

A bus and train were used on the way back. The hike provided those in the group with spectacular vistas of the Andes mountains including the so-called "Dead Woman's Pass," a rock formation that sits 13,400 foot above sea level and that looks like the nose and chin of a dead woman.

Machu Picchu itself, a 15th century citadel complete with a Temple of the Sun located on a mountain ridge, is considered the most recognized remnant of the Inca civilization. Buildings at the site, which was rediscovered in 1911, have been reconstructed and the site is now a UNESCO world heritage site and in fact was voted as one of the new seven wonders of the world in an internet poll in 2007.

After this mountaintop experience in Peru, William

and Mary and their group were off to La Paz in adjacent Bolivia, a city in a valley.

They were there to participate in a Habitat for Humanity global village project, building a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen onto a family home in an adjacent city.

The project was done for a mother, her 18-year-old daughter Lizeth, who suffers from a serious illness and another younger daughter.

One of the criteria for qualifying for a Habitat build project in Bolivia is being a parent of a child with a disability or serious illness.

The group worked with two local stone masons and an architect on the project which involved preparing the foundation, laying a floor from the stones from the foundation dig, mixing cement, putting up walls, and bending and assembling rebar to secure the wall corners.

Their time in Bolivia was not all work as they also had taken along with them games and craft supplies, which they shared with locals. Since the group left Bolivia, more progress has been made on the build project and the family will be moving in this month.

A day of rest and relaxation

at Lake Titicaca on the border between Peru and Bolivia rounded out the trip. Lake Titicaca, in the Andes mountains, is the highest navigable fresh water lake in the world.

William and Mary Passmore participated in a Habitat for Humanity build in the Yukon in 2013.

There's another Habitat build trip coming up in the Yukon this July.

There is also a similar house building project in Nicaragua with the Shoebox organization which will be happening this August.

William suggested that volunteers can become involved with Habitat for Humanity by going on a build trip overseas, by volunteering at the Habitat Re-Store on Iber Road in Stittsville, by taking part in a local Habitat build such as one happening in Orleans in April, or by serving on a local committee that provides support for families that will become owners of local Habitat-built homes.

Peru is on the west coast of South America. Bolivia is a land locked country bordered by Brazil on the north and east, by Paraguay on the southeast, by Argentina on the south, on the southwest by Chili and on the northwest by Peru.

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