

Local volunteers attend Texas Training Conference



ATTENDED CONFERENCE Three parishioners from Holy Innocents Catholic Church attended an annual training conference in October at Waxahachie, Texas for the volunteer program Prisoner Visitation and Support. Attending were, from left: Dan Struble, Vanessa Emem and Carl Pope.

Halcottsville — Three parishioners from Holy Innocents Catholic Church attended an annual training conference in October at Waxahachie, Texas for the volunteer program Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS). PVS volunteers visit prisoners in federal and military prisons throughout the United States with the primary focus on prisoners who do not ordinarily receive visits from family and friends while incarcerated and who long for contact with people outside the prison system. Vanessa Emem and Dan Struble visit prisoners in Brooklyn and Otisville, respectively, and Carl Pope gives support to the program.

PVS visitors provide friendship, encouragement, and a listening ear to prisoners, and help them maintain their self-esteem and encourage their efforts to improve themselves so they can live productive lives upon their release back into society. Founded in 1968, PVS is authorized by the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Department of Defense to visit all federal and military prisons in the United States. Although sponsored by many religious groups, including the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America, of which Holy Innocents is a parish, PVS visitors do not impose a particular religion or philosophy on prisoners. They accept prisoners as they are, and try to support their self-growth.

The theme of this year's conference was "Visiting Changes Everything – More Than We Ever Know," and included a tour of a women's medical facility to learn about services for prisoners. Research reveals that female prisoners receive fewer visits than male prisoners, and that prisoners who receive regular visits are less likely to end up back in prison. More information about PVS can be obtained at prisonervisitation.org.