

FACES IN OUR MIDST

HE'S FOND OF DIRTY WORK...

Parishioner Jon Trauth likes to get his hands dirty. In fact, he's often happiest when he's gardening and up to his elbows in mud. Currently a counseling doctoral candidate at the University of Cincinnati, he's doing his dissertation on horticultural therapy. He became interested in the subject during a summer internship working with Burundian refugees at St. Leo's. Many of them had been farmers in Africa and working the land seemed to give them a sense of pride and confidence. In fact they often became the experts showing Jon the way they tilled the crops at home. He saw their spirits lift as they worked together and they began to develop relationships based on mutual respect. It was a win-win for all of them.

When he first came to St. Leo's in the summer of 2008, Jon had described himself as a *roamin* Catholic, going from church to church but never really finding a home. That changed after his experience with the refugees and he's been an active parishioner ever since.

Getting involved in gardening was a natural for Jon who had always had his own garden and has been environmentally conscious. He has solar panels on his home and drives a hybrid car. His brother Brandon teaches horticulture and Jon has worked with the Civic Garden Center and Findlay market on urban gardening. He believes in the value of helping people grow, harvest, and eat their own fresh produce and sees this as especially important for people who don't have access to a nearby grocery store. Though many people are able to get some produce from St. Leo's food pantry it's just not enough to meet the need.



Jon Trauth with UC interns Natasha Lovely and Jocelin Morrow.

He's negotiated deals on soil to replenish the dirt in the hillside garden behind the parking lot. He often brings seed packets to give away at church and it's not uncommon to see seedlings he has started in the vestibule of the church, free for the taking. One Easter he even had baby chicks in the back of church.

A people person by disposition, Jon has also been a connector for St. Leo's. Often the church will get a call from someone wanting to volunteer after talking to Jon about the parish ministries. He is also responsible for getting two University of Cincinnati social work interns here for this year and is serving as their supervisor.

St. Leo's is glad he is a *roamin* Catholic no more.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate