Calendar

May 1
Full Plate Diet Seminar at the Central California Conf. Office

May 1
Disaster Relief Training at the Central California Conf. Office

May 1-4
Soquel Volunteer Project

May 13-15
Pathfinder Fair at Central Valley Christian Academy

May 14
Senior Citizen Seminar at the Central California Conf. Office

May 15
Prison Ministry Training at the Central California Conf. Office

May 15-18
Camp Wawona Volunteer Project

May 21
Parenting Seminar at the Central California Conf. Office

May 27-30
Hispanic Youth Retreat at Camp Wawona

May 28-Sept. 3 (except July 16)
Yosemite Sabbath Service at the Lower River Amphitheater in Yosemite

June 19-July 2
ARISE CROSS training in San Jose

June 20-July 10
Teen Bible Academy

July 14-23
Camp Meeting at Soquel

Newsletter for Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Imani Center Makes Philadelphian Church Relevant in San Francisco

By Shenalyn Page

More than 400 people attended the San Francisco Philadelphian Church during the 1980s. But over the years, attendance had dwindled significantly.

“Church is not that relevant in San Francisco,” says Pastor David Hudgens. “If the church had closed in 2006, the community would never have known the difference.”

But some committed lay people were unwilling to see that happen. Church members Cynthia Williams and Helen and Albert Hill initiated discussions in 2007 on ways the church could “scratch where people are itching.” Initial ideas included developing a community computer lab and a compassion ministry to families experiencing trauma.

Funds from the Camp Meeting Evangelism Offering helped get the projects off the ground. The Imani Center for Education and Wellness was founded to reduce prejudice and act as an umbrella for the outreaches. (Imani means faith in Swahili.)

The Hills created the Imani Center in a church storage room. The comfortable office environment includes computers, desks, lounge seats, and most importantly, Adventist literature. Helen opens the Center to the public from 3:30 to 7:00 p.m. weekdays. A reading specialist, she uses her skills to provide literacy training to community children.

A young boy in the literacy program and his mom are now attending church functions. “I’m having a great time doing this!” Helen says. “I’m committed because of the conversations and mini-Bible studies I get to have with people who drop by. I try to use all the opportunities that present themselves to share Jesus.”

Williams organized church members to provide a compassion ministry to community families experiencing trauma such as death, displacement or other tragedies. Church members provide transportation, prepare meals, offer grief counseling, and host memorial services. A phone service answers calls, then forwards them to the appropriate church member.

Cont. on next page
“We have been able to help several families in trauma,” says Williams. “We’ve continued to follow up with them, because we don’t want it to just be a splash in the pan, then never hear from us again. Our goal is to make friends so we can invite them to church.” Several Bible studies have resulted from this ministry.

Part of the Imani Center has been developed as a seminar space. A smoking cessation program was recently held. At the end, a psychologist asked questions about the Adventist philosophy on health. Pastor Hudgens showed *The Adventists* documentary as an answer. The woman was obviously touched.

A bi-monthly community brunch and various health seminars are also helping to make the church relevant to its community, resulting in Bible studies and baptisms.

“The Imani Center is allowing us to make real connections with people. I believe this is just the beginning of our viability in the city,” says Pastor Hudgens. “Our goal is to use the Imani Center as a base where our church members can use their skill sets to provide real help to the community. We’ve got a very committed group of church members. There is so much potential here for reaching out to the city.”

Albert Hill helps two students with their computer skills.

### Breakfast with Friends

Every Sunday morning for more than 20 years, volunteers arrive at 7:00 a.m. at the Mountain View Central Adventist Church. They are there to cook breakfast, and not just a simple affair of cereal and toast. It is a breakfast fit for a king and queen: hash browns, eggs, French toast or pancakes, toast, hot cereal, fresh fruit, and orange juice.

Breakfast with Friends is designed to show the love of Jesus with no strings attached, to be His hands and feet. The guests are the homeless and working poor.

Today, Breakfast with Friends is as strong as ever. Between 40-70 guests attend each Sunday morning, eating as much as they want. Takeout boxes are available upon request.

“We mostly serve men but also a few women and families. Many of those we serve are homeless, living under bridges, in parks, or in their cars,” explains Steve Moran, church elder. “Others are the working poor who take advantage of a restaurant-style breakfast they could never afford.”

At times finding volunteers is the biggest challenge. During the school year, high school students satisfying their community service requirements, more than filling the volunteer needs.

“By summertime we would occasionally find three or four of us struggling to get it all done on time,” Moran says. Then five years ago the Octagon Service Club at Monte Vista High School in Cupertino took on Breakfast with Friends as one of their favored projects. “We now are forced to limit the number of volunteers each week, sometimes turning away kids.”

Four years ago the students wanted to add Thanksgiving Day to the schedule. This past November Kevin, a former volunteer and now enrolled in a culinary school, planned the menu and managed the kitchen. Miraculously, food prepared for 60 stretched to feed more than 100 people.

Moran shares, “With awe and amazement I can report that the faith of those mostly atheist or agnostic teenagers was greater than mine, and that faith was rewarded.”
The violence started about two years ago,” says Lisseth Pasillas about her hometown of Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. “Traveling at night is dangerous.” She grew up on the campus of the Adventist University where her dad still teaches and her mom is the girls’ dean. Watching the news, Lisseth grew concerned. Even though her parents assured her they were safe, she had to see for herself. “I guess they were used to it,” she says. What she learned during the visit is like something straight out of the Bible.

Once in Mexico, a childhood friend shared rumors from town. There were angels surrounding the school. “Is it true?” Lisseth asked. “Yes, this is not the first time we’ve heard about the angels,” Lisseth’s parents told her. “We hear this from neighbors and businesses, but we have never seen them. Only the town’s people see them.”

The angel soldiers are described as very tall and dressed in uniforms different from the Mexican army. The angels are very prepared with sophisticated weapons not available to the local army.

Because of the escalating and widespread violence, Mexican armies rotate between dangerous regions to assist the local police. But they are spread too thin and gaps in protection happen.

The staff, their families and students at the university keep hearing about the angel army from those who live outside the campus. But the Adventists have yet to see an angel.

Three hours later, it was down to six students. First and second place had been decided. “Me and a guy had to do a tie breaker for third place,” Rachelle shares. “He was a really good speller.” After three rounds, she won. “I felt happy with the place I got. God really helped me out, kept me calm and helped me to remember my words.”

Afterward, the six winners were invited to the national spelling bee held in Washington, D.C. on May 13-14. When Rachelle realized that May 14 was on Sabbath, there was no hesitation. “I knew then I was not really going. We are here to stand up for our faith so others will know about our faith,” she explains.

“She’s a real hero,” says Mark Ferrell, pastor of the San Francisco Central Church. Rachelle doesn’t see herself as a hero. “God always knows what is best for us. I leave all to Him.”

Adventist Student Excels in Spelling

On March 24, 2011 Rachelle Abello won third place in a spelling bee in Sacramento, Calif. The event culminated months of study and practice and included regional and district competitions. She joined 25 seventh graders, all first place winners from his or her district. Rachelle’s district competition was in Madera where she won first place in her grade and in the fifth-eighth grade category.

This is the second year that San Francisco Adventist School has participated in a state-wide competition sponsored by the Organization of Christian Schools International (ACSI). “There is a shared focus for using the gifts and talents of the students to honor and glorify God,” says Principal Beverly Church.

Studying words from the approved lists for one to two hours each day is a significant commitment. She has a lot of support at home. Diane, her eighth grade sister, won the Central California Conference spelling bee this year. And third grade brother Roldan is right behind them. “We practice some at school,” Rachelle explains, “But most is done at home.”

“It was pretty much like a normal spelling bee,” Rachelle says about the Sacramento experience. “It was long because these kids are the best spellers from their districts.”

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An Army of Angels Surround Montemorelos University

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The protection goes beyond the campus. A man, attempting to make a delivery of medical supplies to an Adventist hospital, was stopped by thieves and robbed. Afraid to return to the previous city, he drove on to the next town.

Just as he arrived, he was stopped again by the same thieves. “We know those people have their God. Open your trunk but just don’t turn around,” the leader commanded. All of the stolen supplies were returned.

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By Caron Oswald

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Planting Shade Trees

How wonderful it is to sit under the shade of a tall tree. It is so relaxing, so calming, it is truly an enjoyable experience. You feel protected from the elements. Thank God for those trees.

When homes are built, trees are usually planted in strategic areas, not only for their esthetic value, but also for their shade. In the summer, a well placed tree can bring relief to the family. Thank God for those trees.

Farmers plant large trees in strategic areas around their property to protect the crops from wind damage. In fact, driving down to Southern California you will often see rows of eucalyptus trees placed in such a manner to protect the orange and citrus groves from the wind and cold air that might damage the crop. Trees help keep the heat in, and the cold out. Thank God for those trees.

Shade trees are an indispensable blessing in our lives. However, shade trees don’t grow overnight. They take time and care to ensure their proper growth.

An old Chinese proverb says, “One generation plants trees and another gets the shade.”

In other words, our generation lives under the shade of the trees planted by our ancestors.

In spiritual terms we derive shade from our parents, from our pastors and teachers. We learn their ethical standards, their perceptions of right and wrong, their sense of moral duty and, above all, their spiritual commitment. Their ideals determined the kind of society we inherited from them. Our generation’s ideals will shape tomorrow’s spiritual and educational culture for our children.

As a conference leader I offer the following questions: Do our plans, our decisions, our policies and guidelines, the vision, mission and implementation of the same, sow trees to shade our children? Or are we cutting the trees of Christian morals, values and standards which will leave our children exposed to the blistering heat of what Satan will expose them to?

In the years to come, what will be said of this window of time and opportunity that you and I have? Will well-shaded children, families, churches, and schools be the evidence of our efforts?

In the conference office, our leadership staff has spent much time in prayer and discussion about our children and families. We have voted to begin a ten-year conference-wide initiative entitled, “From Cradle to Crown—Children First.” This initiative will focus the attention of resources, programs, and leaders on the largest evangelistic resource of our church—our children. I believe you will agree with me that we are in the middle of a spiritual war, a war for the hearts and minds of our children.

May the Lord give us wisdom as we begin to step out in faith, forging plans and making decisions that will provide shade to protect and disciple our children until Jesus comes.

“Our generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts!” Psalm 145:4

Trust in Him,

Ramiro Cano

The loss of power in March because of the waves of winter storms in Oakhurst, Calif., lasted for days. In some areas the outages lasted more than a week. In response, warming centers opened for residents still without power. Neighboring communities also sent help. Madera County sheriff’s spokeswoman Erica Stuart announced that the Community Food Bank was delivering about 40,000 pounds of water to families in need. The delivery was arranged by the Oakhurst Seventh-day Adventist Church and was available at the Von’s Shopping Center on March 24.