Play Ball

25 Ways to Bring Christ to Your Community This Summer

Churches Witness Through Sports Leagues
In Every Issue

3 | Editorial
5 | Newsline
8 | Potluck

Newsletters
25 Allegheny East
27 Allegheny West
29 Chesapeake
31 Columbia Union College
33 Highland View Academy
35 Mountain View
37 Mt. Vernon Academy
39 New Jersey
41 Ohio
43 Pennsylvania
45 Potomac
47 Shenandoah Valley Academy
48 Takoma Academy
51 | Bulletin Board
55 | Last Words

Larry Boggess is president of the Mountain View Conference, headquartered in Parkersburg, W.Va.

Summer Evangelism Guide

10 | Play Ball!
Taashi Rowe
Members all over the Columbia Union Conference are playing softball, basketball, volleyball, and even bowling so they can share Christ with people in their communities. Could sports be a legitimate outreach ministry?

14 | Get Out There!
You want to do your part to fulfill the gospel commission and bring the people in your community to Christ, but the question is “How?” Our summer evangelism guide will give you 25 practical ideas and tell you who’s already using them. Start planning now, so you’ll be ready for summer!

Editorial

So, You Want to be a Witness?

The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord” (Steps to Christ, p. 115). What kind of witness would I be if I incorporated these words from the last chapter of Steps to Christ into my character and practice? The book tells us that each of us is sent “as a letter” to our world where we are to exhibit God’s goodness and mercy. This demonstration is to reflect an accurate picture of Jesus and how He wants us to live, thus showing His service to be attractive.

Reading this passage makes me realize how much grace I need every day, and how much grace we all need every day. I regularly witness how we as Christians have allowed the devil to use us to not reflect a right picture of God. When we let him, Satan leads us to:

- Mistrust God with unbelief and despondency.
- Doubt God’s willingness and power to save us.
- Think God wants to do us harm.
- Murmur against God.
- Keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others.
- Make the Christian life look gloomy, toilsome, and difficult.

WHAT IF WE …

- What if we didn’t dwell on our mistakes, failures, and disappointments, let alone those of others?
- What if we looked upon the bright spots and victories that God has given us?
- What if we made it a rule “never to utter one word of doubt or discouragement?”
- What if we consistently gave words of hope and holy cheer?
- What if we were never gloomy or morose?
- What if we cultivated a patient tenderness with the faults of others?
- What if we cast all our cares upon Jesus and rested in His presence with a calm, cheerful spirit?

If doubting God’s love for us and distrusting His promises grieves away the Holy Spirit, what would happen if we constantly did the opposite, as further noted in Steps to Christ: “Let us look to the monumental pillars, reminders of what the Lord has done to comfort us and to save us from the hand of the destroyer. Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us—the tears He has wiped away, the pain He has soothed, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us” (p. 125).

How powerful our witness would be when taking the hand of a friend or making a new one, if we had praise to God on our lips and in our heart. Such a testimony will attract our friends and neighbors to Jesus. They will see the peace and joy of the obedient life, anchored in serving Christ and communing with Him. And no doubt, when you come around to invite them to your evangelism meetings and church programs, you’ll have already planted positive seeds for the harvest.

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Spring Meeting Highlights

Education, Columbia Union College (CUC), and finances were high on the agenda during last month’s Columbia Union Conference spring meetings. Conference presidents also discussed current evangelism initiatives, and many said they are seeking new ways to address obstacles to growth. The New Jersey Conference, for example, is engaging its pastors in “40 Days of Spiritual Intimacy with Jesus.” Allegheny East Conference is studying the demographics and needs of its target audiences and using the findings in church-planting efforts. Potomac Conference is focused on creating healthy churches. Pennsylvania and Mountain View conference leaders are thrilled that so many members are getting involved in evangelism (i.e., giving Bible studies). “We recently had more than 300 members—including Philadelphia’s Korean church (pictured)—participate in Equipping University with our pastors,” reported Pennsylvania president Ray Hartwell. “Our goal is to lead churches into mission, raise up lay pastors, and equip members to take Pennsylvania for Christ.”

Tithe Up $2 Million
At the end of 2007, total union tithe was $113.1 million, a $2 million increase over 2006. Treasurer Seth Bardu says most of the money is forwarded to the General Conference, the North American Division, and back to the local conference. The Columbia Union retains $9.1 million for operations, CUC, retirement, and financial auditing. About 20 percent of this also goes back to local conferences. And according to Frank Bondurant, vice president for Ministries Development, an additional $200,000 will be used to seed local conference projects this year.

Baptisms Down
Baptisms fell across the union from 5,689 in 2006 to 4,335 in 2007 (see graph). Union president Dave Weigley called for greater correlation between tithe reversion to conferences and evangelism. “When you put resources behind the mission, you drive the mission forward,” he said. He plans to set up a thinktank to brainstorm strategies for bringing more of the 50 million people in this eight-state territory to Christ. Overall, unionwide membership increased to 124,700.

Educators Approve Early Childhood, Distance Education
The Columbia Union Board of Education voted to pursue a distance education pilot program for K-12 students and teachers and to hire someone part time to identify and align all Early Childhood Education programs in the Columbia Union territory with church and government laws, policies, and accreditation requirements.

CUC Board Approves Strategic Plan
Just 65 days into his new job, CUC president Weymouth Spence, EdD, gave his first report to Executive Committee members. He announced four major actions the CUC Board of Trustees had taken to strengthen the college. They approved his updated strategic plan, immediate implementation of a three-school model, $2.8 million in budget cuts, and affirmation of the school’s location. “We are staying in Takoma Park, Md., and are committed to revitalizing our present campus,” Spence noted. See the full story in The Gateway newsletter on page 31.
Disaster Response Leaders Unite, Plan, and Train

Adventist Community Services Disaster Response (ACSDR) leaders from seven local conferences (below), clad in their familiar yellow shirts, gathered at the Columbia Union Conference headquarters recently for an advisory council.

Potomac Conference Disaster Response coordinator Bob Mitchell, who also serves as Columbia Union coordinator, facilitated the meeting. Sung Kwon, director of Adventist Community Services (ACS) for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD) and its Disaster Response arm, was also present and shared news about NAD’s newly designed Community Services (ACDS)—funded by NAD ACS. This is just one component of the conference’s evangelistic initiative, which includes tentative plans for citywide and regional evangelistic meetings and the planting of a new church in South Philadelphia. Area pastors (above), who recently met with Torres (seated), believe her efforts will complement and strengthen their ongoing outreach initiatives.

Leaders Unite, Plan, and Train

Each of the participants left with a better understanding of their roles in disaster response and a renewed sense of unity and commitment to this vital ministry. To keep the channels of communication open, Mitchell and the conference coordinators plan to convene quarterly teleconferences.

Community Mapping Project Completed in Allegheny East

Carl Sobremisana, project manager for the Community Youth Mapping Project, recently completed a demographic analysis of Jersey City and Montclair, N.J. The project was organized by leaders of the Columbia Union’s Newark metro initiative—Adventist Community Development Services (ACDS)—and funded by NAD ACS. According to Sobremisana, community mapping is a method of discovering what social services are being offered in a particular geographical area and comparing that with the findings of community needs assessments. Local civic organizations use this information to determine what kind of programming is needed in a community. Now Adventist churches are using it as well.

For this study, young people from Allegheny East Conference’s Beth-el church in Jersey City and the First church of Montclair surveyed the community and gathered the raw data. Sobremisana’s report will help Adventist churches as they seek to reach and impact their communities. Because of the project, visibility of the Adventist Church has increased, and ACDS is now recognized as a partner and leader in the community.

Pennsylvania Trains Members to Lead With Compassion

Eight Pennsylvania Conference churches and groups gathered in Harrisburg recently for Social Action Leadership Training (SALT). Their focus was to equip and prepare members to become actively involved in their churches through community ministry and to become actively involved in their communities through compassion ministries and make disciples for Christ.

The main presenter was Gaspar Colón, PhD, professor of Religion and director of the Center for Metropolitan Ministry at Columbia Union College (CUC) in Takoma Park, Md. Throughout the weekend, he shared the biblical basis for community action and social justice and challenged attendees to become “transformation agents” in their communities.

Other presenters included Tammy Horst, conference communication director and a coach for their Natural Church Development initiative. She instructed and led the members in team-building exercises. Andy Clark, director of the ACS Greater Pittsburgh ministry initiative and a CUC graduate, talked about how to gain a better understanding of a community and its needs from demographic research, interviews, and mapping.

Colón closed the weekend with a planning session. All of the participating leaders, including those from Allentown church (below), established goals for their churches, set deadlines, and received homework assignments, which they must have completed by this month’s follow-up training session.

“This innovative SALT curriculum will help our churches create a positive balance between community service and evangelistic outreach,” says Pennsylvania president Ray Hartwell. “It will help our churches to be healthy, grow, and benefit their communities.”

Bible Worker Aids Philadelphia Effort

As part of their 2008 evangelism initiative, the Pennsylvania Conference’s Philadelphia churches have enlisted the help of Bible worker Lillian Torres, who previously worked on Mountain View and Potomac conference efforts. Starting with the Philadelphia Boulevard and Lansdale (Pa.) churches, her plan is to assist and train members—a few churches at a time—to follow-up on the Bible study interests received from promotional mailings.

For their exemplary work over the years, ACSDR has been recognized by FEMA as one of the top voluntary organizations active in disaster response. —Joseph Luste, PhD

Tools and Tips

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Led by Chesapeake ACSDR coordinator Kitty Juneau and a team of experienced volunteers—Mark Hann, Ann Sulkowski, Clayton Flowers, and Richard and Connie Geer—attendees were taught how to receive, sort, and process donated goods and manage such an operation. They also role-played contact with donors, disaster survivors, public media, and community officials.

On-hand and lending additional support for the daylong training were union ACSDR coordinator Bob Mitchell; New Jersey’s conference director, J. Wayne Hancock, and local co-coordinator Norman Talley of the Tranquility (N.J.) church and Cherry Hill’s Claudia Ramirez; and Ohio’s coordinator, Pastor Roy Nelson.

Through this event and another recent training session for 56 volunteers, participants and leaders recognized the importance of having conferences and churches work together in times of disaster. For their exemplary work over the years, ACSDR has been recognized by FEMA as one of the top voluntary organizations active in disaster response. —Joseph Luste, PhD

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play instruments like the mandolin, dobro, and fiddle. This sophomore release includes two cover tunes and 15 original songs, written primarily by Mirek and Brian Walker.

The group regularly plays for church events and community music festivals. “Being a part of this group is a blessing,” states 20-year-old Nathan Wagoner. “Through all our practice and performing, if just one person comes to Christ, it will be well worth it.” Sample and order their CD at www.myspace.com/bluemorningband.

Books >
Sixty-Six Puzzles About the Book of Sixty-Six, Book 2
Gwen Bradford Norwood

Empty nest syndrome drove author Gwen Bradford Norwood of Allegheny East Conference’s Pine Forge (Pa.) church to create a fun way to learn the gospel. “When my youngest daughter went to college,” she explains, “I prayed and the answer was ‘Write puzzles.’” Since then the mother of three, who serves as a Sabbath School teacher, assistant treasurer, deaconess, and Personal Ministries leader, has written seven such books geared toward people age 9 and up. “By the time Book 7 is published, all of the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be in puzzle form,” she states. The 145-page book is chock full of crossword, word search, fill-in-the-blank, and other brain teasers and will challenge people at all knowledge levels. Schoolteachers, Sabbath School leaders, or anyone looking for a creative way to test their Bible knowledge or teach others, can purchase both editions at Amazon.com or request them through Barnes and Noble bookstores.

Technology >
Online Music Store
TheChristianJukebox.com

“We’re picking up a banjo teacher school,” recalls group leader David Wagoner. “All of this group is a blessing,” she explains, “I prayed and the answer was ‘Write puzzles.’” After catching the vision of creator, president, and the city, it is considered “the” social services provider for Takoma Park. At current executive director Ron Wylie (left) and his staff and volunteers open their doors Monday through Thursday to those in need. Each year they help over 6,500 people with basic services (food and clothing); housing and prescription assistance; and health education classes in conjunction with neighboring Washington Adventist Hospital. Community education is another component of the center’s ministry. They offer three computer classes and ongoing ESL classes. Thanks to a newly acquired “memo of collaboration” with three local organizations, the center now provides students with computer and technology training after school. This service has already helped the staff acquire upgraded computers for their teaching lab and administrative network.

In addition to the physical needs he encounters daily, Wylie is also concerned about the spiritual needs of his clients. “Our purpose is to lead people to a personal relationship with the Lord that can provide them with peace and hope in spite of despairing circumstances,” he says. To that end, he plans to offer “crisis ministry” training for lay pastors. —Lilly Tryon, MSN, RN, Adventist WholeHealth Wellness Center

Did You Know?

Due to increasingly smaller demand, Postum—the favorite non-caffeinated beverage of many an Adventist—is now officially off the market. Thankfully, Columbia Union members can still find Roma, carob, chicory, and other coffee alternatives at your local Adventist Book Center.

What You Bring to the Table

On a Mission > ACS of Greater Washington

Nestled in the pastoral setting of Sligo Avenue, in Takoma Park, Md., Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington—which opened in 1983—is a bustling center of compassionate activity. Supported by six area churches and stemming from the long history between Seventh-day Adventists and the city, it is considered “the” social services provider for Takoma Park.

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Music >
Two Boards and Three Nails
Blue Morning

“It all started in a little, one-teacher school,” recalls group leader David Wagoner. “Two boys (in grades 7-8) picked up a banjo and guitar and refused to put them down.” After adding a few more musicians, most from Ohio Conference’s Piqua church, their “organic” bluegrass/gospel band was born. That was six years ago. The group now has seven members, aged 20 to 58, who sing and...
For Ward, basketball is also a way of giving something back. “Some don’t see basketball as a ministry,” he says. “But everybody has a different [spiritual] gift, a different way to minister.”

His cousin, Marlyn Banks, 27, joined Emmanuel in August 2004. Banks said basketball alone did not bring him into the Adventist Church. But because he had to attend services to stay on the team, he heard a message that was pivotal in solidifying his decision. “It was one of those sermons where I felt like the pastor was talking to me,” Banks recalls. He also felt welcomed and comfortable attending church with his basketball friends and knew he could share questions and concerns with the pastor.

Every Kid Ought to Play Baseball

Every summer, for the past seven years, more than 200 kids—ages 5 to 15—get to play baseball in an atmosphere of prayer through the Spencerville church’s league in Silver Spring, Md. “From day one, parents, coaches, and members are given slips of paper listing the players’ names so they can pray for them,” says Kevin Davidson, senior division commissioner of the Spencerville Adventist Baseball League (www.leaguelineup.com/sabl).

They accept every child who wants to play baseball, whether they attend Adventist, other Christian, or public schools. “This is about inclusion not separation,” Davidson says. “Every kid ought to be playing baseball, and they should be playing in a Christian league.”

While he can’t say for sure that anyone has joined this Chesapeake Conference church from playing on the team, he believes the bond that team sports create affords each coach “a phenomenal [opportunity] to reach a kid’s heart for God.” He also points out that the kids are learning physical and mental skills and how to react to situations in a Christ-like way.

When asked if he sees the league as a ministry, Davidson responds, “When you start from a place of prayer, how can it not be?”

Softball, Barbeques, and Bible Studies

“It’s easier to say, ‘Come play ball with us!’ than to invite people to church,” says Michael McDaniel, 47, who has coached and played for Washington, D.C.’s Capitol Hill Cubs.

Rawling isn’t the only Adventist who sees sports as more than just a way to get exercise. Members all over the Columbia Union Conference are playing softball, basketball, volleyball, and even bowling so they can share Christ with people in their communities. Some have also started sports leagues that engage multiple churches in seasonal games. While it may not always be written in their bylaws, these churches see sports as a legitimate ministry.

Basketball Scores 10 Baptisms

When the Emmanuel and Maranatha churches in Cincinnati, Ohio, joined the Allegheny West Conference’s basketball league three years ago, no one could have predicted that 10 players would join the Adventist Church. Gary Ward Jr., 29, admits that when he talked to his pastor about starting a team, he just wanted to play a game he loved. Lloydston Burton, who pastors both churches, opened up the team to community residents with the understanding that they would not swear, do drugs or alcohol, and that all team members would attend church on the Sabbath. There was a game. Once he had the green light, Ward invited his friends and cousins to join the “Saints.”

“After attending services, they were able to see what our church was all about,” Ward recalls. “They saw that it’s not just one day thing; members call during the week to see how you’re doing.”

Ward, who saw young men leave the church because they felt limited by it, sees basketball as a way to prevent that. “If you go to a public school, basketball games are on Friday [nights] so Adventists can’t join the team,” he says. “If you take something away from someone, you have to replace it. You can’t say no to everything. We have to show that you can believe in God and have fun; you don’t have to sacrifice one for the other.”

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Athletics, and Cardinals softball teams for 14 years. But win or lose, this Allegheny East Conference church—part of the Metropolitan Area Adventist Softball Association that includes nine churches—always has a barbeque after the game. McDaniel, who recently became the league’s commissioner, believes this environment makes it easy for members to get to know people outside of the church and vice versa.

In addition to the picnics, the league allows five nonmembers out of 25 people to join each team. There is no intense recruiting, but players often invite family, friends, and co-workers to participate or watch the game. As the relationships grow, they offer Bible studies and invite nonmembers to church. As a result, McDaniel knows of several players who have joined Washington-area churches.

“What you don’t want is a team with eight or nine [people] who just want to play softball and have no interest in God,” he notes. “This is not about winning some athletic scholarship. But it is about having fun and also about witnessing.”

✦ Standing Up for Our Faith ✦

Jeff Thomas, a fifty-something elder at the Parkersburg (W.Va.) church, remembered how much fun the church had when they played volleyball years ago. So when members talked about rejoining the local Christian league, he looked forward to playing again.

Thomas, the team’s coach, says that even though the league asks people who play to attend church twice a month, their main goal is to have fun—not push anyone to join.

Although they only started playing again in January, he has already seen its potential as a ministry. League tournaments used to be played on Friday evenings, so his team was prepared to forfeit those games. But organizers informed him that they changed the tournaments to Tuesdays and Thursdays so Adventists can play. “It is wonderful when we can witness like that, when people can see what we are doing, see us standing up for our faith,” Thomas says.

“It’s also wonderful to see Adventists getting out into the community to play ball and share our faith!”

Taashi Rowe writes from Takoma Park, Md.

We have to show that you can believe in God and have fun; you do not have to sacrifice one for the other.

—Gary Ward Jr.
You want to do your part to fulfill the gospel commission and bring the people in your community to Christ, but the question is “How?”

As Ellen White counseled in Christ’s Object Lessons, “We are not to wait for souls to come to us; we must seek them out where they are” (p. 229). So this summer, before you put up the tents, rent the halls, print the brochures, or knock on doors, get out there and mingle as one who desires the good of your community.

We hope this six-page guide—filled with practical ideas, innovative ideas, and even some new twists on old ideas—will help you get started:

1. Host a car show. That’s one way to get people to locate the Adventist church. New Jersey’s Meadow View Junior Academy in Chesterfield is getting ready for its eighth annual antique car show, flea market, and fundraiser that attracts hundreds annually. Mt. Holly pastor Bob Hoyt shows off his 1950 Studebaker and enjoys meeting members of the community.

2. Adopt a police officer or fireman. Some churches adopt highways. But if you want to know the people in your neighborhood, why not visit them, pray for them, and honor them. Until recently Potomac’s Takoma Park (Md.) church pastor, Dan Pabon, served as chaplain of the local police force where he spent time listening, praying with officers, and counseling them during difficult times.

3. Give a caregiver a day off. In every community, people care for elderly parents, disabled children, or others in need of constant support. This can be a lonely, draining responsibility where even the thought of complaining would cause undue feelings of guilt. Find them and offer to stay with their loved one so they can take a break, go out for a meal, or run errands.

4. Minister to military families. Some soldiers are on their second and third deployments to Iraq.

5. Plan a block party. Be sure to get permission from authorities and support from neighbors. Chesapeake’s Hagerstown (Md.) church shared health tips, veggie dogs, and music at last year’s “Fun in the Sun” event, which drew 100 visitors. Allegheny East’s (AEC) Garden of Prayer congregation in Baltimore had a fish fry, music, games, and a flea market.

6. Organize an extreme makeover. No need to call Ty Pennington. Once you’ve identified a home, park, or other community eyesore, fix it up. Get permission from authorities, partner with area organizations, recruit volunteers, and ask local businesses to donate goods and services. When it’s finished, hold a community-wide dedication and celebration for everyone involved.

7. Change your mindset. If you want to reach the community, make sure your church is community-minded. That’s what David L. King, Sr., pastor of AEC’s First church of Paterson, N.J., emphasizes. “I redefined ‘community’ and told members that the community is where they are—on the bus, at work, where they shop,” he says. With this new understanding, members found it easier to witness. Soon visitors started coming from their jobs and neighborhoods. As a result, they’re enjoying a “steady stream of baptisms.”

8. Start a book club. Why should Oprah have all the fun? Invite friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers to participate and choose books that make for thought-provoking discussions. The Women’s Ministries Book Club from Potomac’s Sligo church in Takoma Park, Md., is currently reading A Commonwealth of Thieves.
9. Take summer camp beyond our borders. While summer camps across the Columbia Union serve hundreds of Adventist youth (contact your conference youth department for 2008 schedules), two conferences have taken outreach to new heights:

Helping Single Moms - When Ohio Conference youth director Mike Stevenson heard about the Indiana Conference’s program for single mothers and their children, he decided to try it. At a cost of $50 per mother and $25 per child—often paid by local churches—they get to spend a week at Camp Mohaven in Danville, Ohio, relaxing and reju-venating their bodies, minds, and souls. While the youth participate in Cub or Junior camp activities, their mothers attend seminars on a range of subjects, from managing finances to running a household. Last year, 11 moms and their children attended.—Sherry English

Mentoring Prisoners’ Kids - Thanks to Edith Tucker, president of Allegheny East Conference’s Prison Ministries Federation, 60 to 70 children of incarcerated parents get to attend Camp Daniel L. Davis in Pine Forge, Pa. “While it’s easy to minister to those without problems, I knew these ‘at risk’ children would truly benefit from a camp experience,” she says. While they enjoy a week outdoors, their surrogates—grandparents or other relatives—get a break.

When the kids return home, these caregivers report improved behavior at home and school. As a result of the 3-year-old program, there have been several baptisms.

10. Sponsor a “back to school” giveaway. Some families really can’t afford all the supplies kids need for school.

That’s why AEC’s Trinity Temple members in Newark, N.J., created “Knowledge in a Bag.” Last fall they distributed 300 bags of school supplies to children in their community. Then at Christmas they gave away over 250 toys. With these and other caring initiatives, it’s no wonder they had more than 50 baptisms last year.

11. Pray for opportu-nities to witness. That’s what Potomac’s Radford church did last year, and they were not disappointed. After a church picnic July 4, a few members returned to watch the local fireworks because their location has a good viewing spot. Upon arrival, they were surprised to see the parking lot filling up with community residents. “I think they were surprised to see us too,” laughs Radford member and conference communication director Don Wood. Not passing up an opportunity to serve, the small congregation scrambled to make a few light snacks to share. “It was a very spontaneous thing, but it opened the door to additional community out-reach,” Wood says. Later that month, they kicked off an eight-week health series and several residents attended.

12. Go green. We know Jesus is coming soon, but while He tarries, do what you can to care for the environment. Make sure your church, school, and community recycles, and host a free workshop with expert speakers and community leaders.

13. Invite your community to potluck. Hold it in the church or in the park after church. Add music, stir in a children’s story, and share practical tips like the eight principles of health (i.e., water, air, rest), and you’ll have a great recipe to whet their appetite for VBS.

14. Be the center of your community. That’s what Ohio’s Village church did when they opened Agora, a used bookstore in a business storefront in downtown Mason. After hours it’s used for community meet-ings, workshops, literary readings, film screenings, musical performances, cultural events, and to display the work of local artists.

15. Join the club. Or start one like Russell Thomas of Allegheny West’s Southeast church in Cleveland. Their Umoja marriage club provides a safe place for couples to talk about issues, discuss books, and grow their unions. Now, who in your community wouldn’t benefit from such a posi-tive small group ministry?

16. Be like Rocky Twyman. Unless tragedy affects our members, most of us are content to watch the news and pray from afar. Not Rocky Twyman. This resourceful member of Allegheny East’s New Life church in Gahanna, Ohio, did when they passed up an opportunity to see us too,” laughs Radford member and conference communication director Don Wood. Not passing up an opportunity to serve, the small congregation scrambled to make a few light snacks to share. “It was a very spontaneous thing, but it opened the door to additional community outreach,” Wood says. Later that month, they kicked off an eight-week health series and several residents attended.

17. Embark on a homeland mission trip. It’s less expensive, helps raise awareness of your church, and lets your community know you care. Pastor Mike Fortune and Ohio’s First church of Toledo remediated a “pocket park” across the street from the local women’s shelter. Not only did the mayor lead the ribbon-cutting ceremony, their efforts garnered great media coverage.
18. Map your success. AEC’s Beth-el church in Jersey City and First church of Montclair recently partnered with Adventist Community Development Services to make a “map” of their community. Rather than plotting roads, this map enables churches to identify needs and tailor church programs to meet those needs. “One of the greatest needs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in reaching the community is to realize that sometimes what we offer is not necessarily what the community needs,” says Montclair pastor Moses El. From their assessments, his church quickly discovered that it is ill-equipped to meet the needs of its expanding Latino population. As a result, they’re developing an English as a Second Language course.

Another challenge revealed in their findings is that pornography and alcohol addictions are taking a heavy toll on the families and churches in the area. Future plans include seminars to teach people how to contain those addictions.—Sam Betony

19. Go to the fair. Holiday parades, county fairs, and Little League are summer’s community fixtures. Have your Pathfinders march in the Memorial Day parade like Chesapeake’s Westminster (Md.) Timberwolves. Create a message float like members of Potomac’s Staunton (Va.) church. Sponsor an exhibit at the fair like Chesapeake’s Frederick (Md.) church.

20. Go surfing. Over 70 percent of Americans (208 million) are on the Internet and many use it to seek spiritual enrichment. To connect with Latinos, Potomac’s PC Jovenes ministry hosts a very popular youth website—www.pcvjovenes.com—and a social networking page on Facebook. In addition, Mountain View’s Hannah Hendron, 11, created a blog called GEMS (Girls Embracing Moral Standards). Not to be outdone, her brother Benjamin, 9, created BIG (Boys Instigating Good). Both promote spiritual values to their peers. Visit www.gemsclub.wordpress.com and www.bigclub.wordpress.com.

21. Chill at your local coffee shop. If you want to be where the people are, you’ll no doubt find them chillin’ at your local java joint this summer. That’s where central Pennsylvania pastor Lonnie Wibberding (above) sets up a sign and offers free counseling (really). The pastor of six churches and mission plants was intent on making friends in a county where there’s not one Adventist church. In time he met the owner, who also runs a computer shop upstairs, and they decided to start a youth ministry together.

22. Teach life skills. Wouldn’t it be great if there were a curriculum to teach youth the skills necessary to succeed in life? Paula Olivier (pictured, center), assistant pastor of AEC’s Church of the Oranges in Orange, N.J., believed there should be, and proceeded to create one. She got the idea during her senior year in college, but it was seven years before she launched the LifeSkills Academy with 12 participants—six church members and six community youth—who were instructed in five areas: basic auto care, job readiness, financial literacy, income tax preparation, and teen health. The response was overwhelming. Community leaders, including the mayor, were thrilled and lent their support. A local newspaper and a television station covered the story. Churches—Adventist and other denominations (one in South Africa)—and even the local high school, expressed interest in implementing similar programs.

One year wiser, Pastor Olivier is working with community leaders and organizations to launch this summer’s program. It will last six weeks (instead of three), accommodate 15 students, and involve a more comprehensive curriculum with education on drug prevention, sexually transmitted diseases, and housing. Students will also be required to volunteer at local businesses for 20 hours where they’ll be evaluated for professionalism and ethical conduct. In addition to the one for youth, Olivier plans to develop similar adult programs. And, to further expand this outreach program, the church has founded the Community Family Enrichment Services Center. Through it, they aim to improve health and wellness in and beyond their city.—Sam Betony

23. Produce a concert in the park. Church wouldn’t be the same without our musicians. Share their talents with your community by organizing a free concert or summer series at the park or local mall. The Medford, Ore., church is known for their annual “Jesus in the Park” concert.

24. Go to jail. Many churches visit nursing homes on Sabbath afternoon. But Diane Medley Smith, community outreach coordinator for AEC’s North Philadelphia church, regularly takes 30-35 members to the local youth correctional facility. They sing, mime, share poetry, and do skits, all to share positive messages and influence their incarcerated peers to make the right choices.

25. Knock, Knock: If nothing else works, knock on the doors of your neighbors, befriend them, and trust that God will use you to minister to their needs in His time and His way.
The Choice is Yours

More than 350 physicians have chosen to practice award-winning medical care with us.

A member of Adventist Health System, Huguley Memorial Medical Center is a 313-bed hospital located in Fort Worth, Texas. On our campus, you’ll find an ear, nose and throat surgery and imaging center, medical office buildings, neurosciences, surgery homes, health center, community and hospice.

Our fast growing, family-friendly community was recently ranked as one of the top most affordable large cities in the country.

In the heart of a thriving Adventist population, you’re just minutes from the universities Adventist University and the Southeastern Graduate School of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. With 12 Adventist churches and 8 Adventist schools in the area, you’ll soon find the place you belong.

Kathy Ryan, M.D.
Director, Physician Recruitment
817-568-5488

Huguley Memorial Medical Center
As a result of members’ sincere desire to get out of the pews and positively affect their community, the Church of the Oranges in Orange, N.J., recently got involved in a string of neighborhood activities. One such activity came as a result of a new relationship the church developed with the assistant director of the city’s Community Services. He contacted them when it came time for the city’s Project Homeless Connect (PHC).

PHC is a one-day, one-stop event where various community organizations come together to assist the homeless. The services included legal advice; clothing donation; and information on health, housing, and public benefits. The event was held on a Tuesday in a local skating rink. More than 60 community organizations participated and served more than 500 homeless men, women, and children. The church’s Health Ministries department distributed pamphlets on addiction, substance abuse, and parenting. Through members’ in-kind and cash donations, the church was also able to distribute 360 toiletry bags.

“Having accomplished a successful collaboration with the city, the city is taking a more active role in helping us with our own community initiatives,” stated assistant pastor Paula Olivier. “On April 30, the church is sponsoring a prostate screening. The city has volunteered to help us recruit and publicize it through flyer distribution and free advertising on the cable television station.” She added, “This initial experience has opened the door for further partnerships that will help to maximize our efforts to impact the community for Christ.”

Church of the Oranges Serves Area Homeless

Church of the Oranges members Ann Sanderson; Carlene Pennicook, Health Ministries leader; and Keith Morris distribute health and other helpful materials to area homeless.

Virginia Ministerium Hosts First Elders Banquet

The pastors of the Virginia Ministerium hosted their first local elders banquet at a conference center in downtown Portsmouth. More than 100 local elders and their spouses, from each of the ministerium’s 15 churches, attended along with each church pastor and their spouse. Michael W. Dyson, a district pastor in Suffolk and Franklin, Va., coordinated the evening. Adventist Chaplain Raynard Allen, stationed in Norfolk, was the guest speaker. Recording artist Kimberly Palmer presented the evening’s special music.

“We wanted this occasion to celebrate the ministry efforts and support of our local church elders,” said Pastor Gary Banks, Virginia area leader. Banks further defined the threefold purpose of the event: “We also wanted to strengthen the bonds between pastors and their elder teams, and to encourage all of our local elders to attend the training provided by the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) during its annual elders retreat.” He added, “The pastor and elder are a team that can do a mighty work when under the direction of the Holy Spirit.”

—Michael Dyson

Female elders from the Virginia Ministerium share a light moment.

More than 100 elders and their spouses from the Virginia Ministerium registered to attend their first local elders banquet.
Exposé

Baltimore Junior Academy Opens New Gymnasium

H onorable guests, church mem-
bers, students, parents, and friends gathered recently to cele-
brate the grand opening of Baltimore Junior Academy’s (BJA) new gymnasium. The day started
with an open house where principal Dorine E. Robinson, school board
chair Kenneth Jones, BJA national alumnus representative LaShawn Williams, and area home and school leader
Veronica Williams all provided special
remarks.

Later attendees made their way to the gymnasium for the ribbon-cutting
ceremony. The Liberty Heights
church Pathfinder Drum Corps
(below) started the celebration by
posting the colors, BJA’s upper and
lower division choir provided special
music. Special recognition was given
to those who have played a special
part in the construction of the new
gym, including C.D. Jenkins, building
commitee chair and pastor of the
city’s Sharon church. BJA is also the
current home to the Garden of
Prayer congregation. Honorable guests included Counciwoman Sharon Middleton
(6th District) who said, “Baltimore
Junior Academy has always been a
well respected neighborhood
school. The opening of this new
gym is also another way this edu-
cational institution can continue to
build and strengthen community
relationships and partnerships.”

Students are excited about their
new 74-ft. long gym. “I can’t wait
for a basketball team,” said sev-
enth-grader Kevin Cooper. The
building project was an effort
organized by AEC’s six Baltimore-
area churches.—Tiffany Sewell and
Veronica Williams

Officer Highlighted in Township Newsletter

Pastor Danny Davis (below), the conference’s
Trust Ministries officer and retired Youth Ministries direc-
tor, was recently profiled in the
Douglass Township (Pa.) newsletter, an area that includes Pine Forge.
Selected for his long-time support
of various city organizations and
efforts, Davis’ efforts with the Pine
Forge Historical Society have been
very appreciated.

“Pastor Davis’ history seemed to
demonstrate what the Seventh-day Adventist communi-
ty is all about: work, good health practices, reverence,
and service to others,” commented newsletter editor
Sandra Lloyd on why they profiled Davis. “With the
Adventist community being at least one very important
area of the township that demonstrates harmony ... I
have found that readers who regularly drive through the
area are interested in the new buildings, such as the
Jessie Wagner Elementary School [an Adventist institu-
tion] we featured in an earlier issue, and the yearly sum-
er (camp meeting).”—Beth Michaels

Mt. Sinai Concludes 5-Year Campaign

Members of the Mt. Sinai congregation in Trenton,
N.J., spent a good part of the past five years actively
witnessing to their neighbors and growing their mem-
bership. By dividing the church into groups, they spent
weeks at a time distributing religious tracts after
church services. During their five-year campaign, they
distributed more than 77,500
tracts. With the help of confer-
ence Bible workers, they fol-
lowed up with their neighbors and
generated more than 800 Bible study
interests. “There were so many, we had to stop,”
recalled Pastor Paul Turner.

To wrap up their outreach efforts, conference evan-
gelist Conklin B. Gentry (above) recently led a five-
week evangelistic effort in the church’s neighborhood.
As a result, more than 78 attendees were baptized, re-
 baptized, or professed their faith. The church plans to
hold another campaign this summer to bring more
interests to Christ.—Beth Michaels

Chinoma Patterson, a member of the Dale Wright
Memorial church in Germantown, Ohio, recently
joined 16 other volunteers from around the United
States, New Zealand, and Australia to make a differ-
ence in Swaziland, Africa. The trip was through Seeds
Of Hope Outreach (SOHO), a volunteer driven ministry
that seeks to alleviate pain and hunger in the lives of
orphans, vulnerable children, and elderly through pro-
grams that address their physical, emotional, and
spiritual needs. Patterson and the volun-
teers collected enough clothing, shoes, blankets,
books, and other essential items to fill two 40 ft.
by 20 ft. shipping
containers. Each day for two
weeks, they
traveled to small
villages to set up
medical and

clothing
clinics, phar-
yms, and
children’s
programs.
At one clinic
alone, they
were able to
serve more
than 1,400
people.

Swaziland currently has the highest HIV/AIDS rate
in the world today. “We wanted to have a lasting affect
on the children’s lives,” said Patterson. The way
SOHO addressed this issue was to build “Welcome
Places,” which are scheduled for completion this
month. These welcoming structures will provide resi-
dents with a place to find counseling, food, formal and
HIV/AIDS education, as well as spiritual renewal.

“The things I will always remember are the smiles,
songs, and children, who—in the eyes of the world—
are in the most pitiful conditions,” added Patterson.
“But their condition does not stop their joy.” For
more information about SOHO, visit www.seed-
ssofhopeoutreach.com.

Rock of Faith Initiates Super Bowl Outreach

W hile all of America’s football fans wondered if the Patriots could cap off a perfect season with a victory in
Super Bowl XLII, the members of the Rock of Faith church in Pittsburgh used the occasion as an opportunity
for fun, fellowship, and —most of all—evangelism. Members invited family and friends to join them for a Super
Bowl party hosted by Pastor Chioma Moran. They gathered for food; games; the “big game,” of course; and an added
surprise. The evening was filled with excitement as guests won gifts and prizes by answering football trivia and guessing the game score before the end of each quarter.

Then, as millions of Americans turned their attention to the halftime show, Rock of Faith members held their own halftime show. Pastor Christopher Thompson gave “commercials” on upcoming church events and delivered a stirring message to invite the visitors to dedicate their lives to Christ.

“The party was a great opportunity for us to strengthen relationships among ourselves and build awareness about what we have to offer our community,” said Pastor Thompson. “Most of all, it affords us the chance to extend the invitation to discipleship to those who may never have that chance in a church setting."

“It felt like one big family coming together,” commented Allison Wiles, one of the party coordinators. “I believe that the hearts of those in attendance were really touched. To God be the glory for the great things He has done.”

Dale Wright Member Serves Swaziland Children

Mt. Sinai Church

Allegheny West Conference

2008 Annual Conference

1170 East Seventh Street

PO Box 266, Pine Forge, PA 19548

Phone: (301) 356-4101
www.mtsinaiymca.org

Pastor Davis’ efforts with the Pine
Forge Historical Society have been
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Ramah Junior Academy Dedicates Marshall Library

Juan Marshall (below) was born to teach, and ministered for 24 years in the classroom at Ramah Junior Academy (RJA). She was also a loving and faithful mother to two sons, Bryan and Byran Marshall, and leaves them, a loving mother, and a host of family and friends to mourn. It was for her commitment to RJA that the school recently renamed its library in her memory.

Marshall often referred to her real boss as Jesus, and was determined to be accountable to Him. She took Ellen G. White’s statement about every teacher being held accountable for time “used and misused” literally. With the help of the Lord, Marshall tried to utilize each minute, in every class, to prepare her students for this world as well as the world to come. She spent countless hours devising new methods to reach her students for God. She aspired to place each of her children’s hands into the hand of the Almighty. Because of Marshall’s diligence at RJA, she was often referred to as Martha, Lazarus’ busy sister.

Teacher Celeste Giles, a co-worker and friend for 17 years—and Bible counterpart, Mary—often cautioned her to slow down. Marshall’s diligence was officially noted twice. The Columbia Union Conference presented her with the Zapara Award for Educational Excellence. The world honored her in the list of “Who’s Who of American Teachers.” Marshall also excelled as an RJA principal. Under her direction, students participated in feeding the homeless and providing clothing to more than 300 homeless.

Even in the midst of her illness, Marshall’s heart was with her students, and she longed to return to teach for the 2007-08 school year. God, however, had a different plan, calling her to rest until His second coming. Goodnight, sweet sister. I’ll meet you in the morning.—Celeste Giles

Youth Leaders Enrichment Day Keeps Growing

The annual Youth Leaders Enrichment Day, sponsored and organized by the conference Youth Ministries department, set another attendance record as more than 120 youth leaders recently took advantage of this unique training opportunity. Enrichment Day is designed to equip youth leaders with the proper leadership resources and tools to enable them to run effective ministry programs in their home churches.

Held at the Baltimore White Marsh church in Maryland, attendees were able to participate in three hourlong sessions in one of eight different tracks of study. The tracks included Adventurer Club, Kingdom: The Challenge, Pathfinders, Teen Leader in Training, Master Guide, Pathfinder Leadership Award, and Conservation Masters (Honors). Experienced youth ministry leaders and pastors taught the tracks.

The worship service featured music provided by Ascend, the Hagerstown (Md.) church praise team. Jonathon Tejal (above), Pathfinder director for the worldwide Adventist Church, presented an inspirational message on being the hands of Christ in the world today. Following the worship experience, attendees were treated to a fellowship luncheon organized by the host church and served by their Pathfinder Club members.

Enrichment Day is part of an annual training package that includes the Youth Leaders Convention, a weekend event held each September at the Mt. Aetna Camp and Retreat Center near Hagerstown. Together these two events give local youth leaders a great opportunity to expand their horizons, sharpen their skills, and share their experiences. Is it any wonder these gatherings keep growing?
New Hope Shares Its Strength to Benefit Mozambique

As part of the mission focus of the New Hope church in Fulton, Md., a team of volunteers was organized recently to respond to critical needs in both their local community and around the world. The church volunteers are known as the SOS team, an acronym for Sharing Our Strength. Since their establishment in 2006, SOS team members have twice visited the Gulf Coast to assist with the ongoing saga left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. They have also responded generously to the needs of an orphanage in Haiti by funding an addition that now houses more than 50 children. Since the first of the year, two teams have spent time assisting with the work at the orphanage.

Team leader Dave Wooster reported that momentum was building for a trip overseas when team member Monty Jacobs, who also serves on the Maranatha Volunteers International (MVI) board, shared the needs of the Adventist church in Mozambique. With more than 200,000 members in an incredibly poor country, and with relatively few church buildings, there is a desperate need to build houses of worship. Maranatha stepped up to the challenge and has committed to build 1,001 churches to build houses of worship. Maranatha stepped up to the challenge and has committed to build 1,001 churches.

Last September, where he learned that Maranatha was also planning to drill 1,001 water wells—one next to each church they build. Wooster’s interest was piqued because his father ran a water well drilling business in Southern Maryland. He offered to help in any way he could. Within two months, MVI had set up a meeting with Wooster and his father to talk about the water project. That meeting resulted in a plan that cut the cost of the well and drilling materials in half by accessing supplies from his father’s local contacts and shipping them from Maryland. Materials to build 120 wells were purchased and shipped to the church, where more than 80 volunteers showed up to load the 2,000 pieces (nearly six miles worth) of pipe into two 40 ft. shipping containers. In addition to the pipes, volunteers and New Hope church members helped collect and donate 4,000 bars of soap and other necessities for fellow believers in Mozambique.

More than 80 SOS (Sharing Our Hope) volunteers from the New Hope church in Fulton, Md., showed up to help load 2,000 pieces of pipe for drilling water wells in Mozambique. In addition to the pipes, volunteers and New Hope church members helped collect and donate 4,000 bars of soap and other necessities for fellow believers in Mozambique.

In addition to the pipes, volunteers and New Hope church members helped collect and donate 4,000 bars of soap and other necessities for fellow believers in Mozambique.

President Pushes New Initiates to Shape Future

After just 64 days on the job, new Columbia Union College (CUC) president Weymouth Spence, EdD, participated in his first meeting with the Board of Trustees, and won overwhelming approval on four major initiatives that will shape CUC’s future.

“First and foremost, we wanted all of our constituents to know we are staying in Takoma Park and are committed to revitalizing our present campus,” stated Spence. “The board has reconﬁrmed this, and we are on the same page. Now it’s time for all of our constituents to join us and put away, once and for all, the idea of moving or closing CUC.”

Weymouth Spence, CUC president, addresses CUC trustees about four initiatives that will help secure the school’s future success.

The board also approved a revised strategic plan, now known simply as “The Plan.” It outlines growth in academic and spiritual programs, improvements in facilities and operations, and commitments to excellence and accountability. “It’s now time to complete its implementation, but with a few revisions,” said Spence of the plan, which was ﬁrst adopted in 2004.

The ripple effect of the SOS team’s focus has been astounding. Once all of the drilling supplies were loaded, there was plenty of room in each container. A distress was building for a trip overseas when team member Monty Jacobs, who also serves on the Maranatha Volunteers International (MVI) board, shared the needs of the Adventist church in Mozambique. With more than 200,000 members in an incredibly poor country, and with relatively few church buildings, there is a desperate need to build houses of worship. Maranatha stepped up to the challenge and has committed to build 1,001 churches to build houses of worship. Maranatha stepped up to the challenge and has committed to build 1,001 churches.

Members of the Columbia Collegiate Chorale and Pro Musica gather outside Carnegie Hall before their recent performance.

The Challenge is published in the Visitor by the Chesapeake Conference # 6600 Martin Road, Columbia, MD 21044 Phone: (301) 991-1910 President & Editor, Rob Vandeman.
NEWS

Columbia Union Designates CUC Sabbath

The Columbia Union Conference has designated May 31 as CUC Sabbath. The special day will allow time for congregations to dedicate a portion of their Sabbath School or divine services to learn about exciting news, success stories, and future plans of the college. CUC will provide speakers, musicians, and printed material for as many congregations as possible. A special offering also will be taken. For more information, contact the CUC Marketing and Communications office at pr@cuc.edu or (800) 835-4212.

Summer Teaching Institute Helps Union Teachers

CUC’s Summer Teaching Institute, hosted by the Department of Education, will take place June 16 to August 8. The 2008 summer sessions are organized into four sections to provide convenient scheduling for traditional education majors, teachers seeking certification, and continuing education credits for certified teachers. The program includes post-baccalaureate 500-level courses and two technology seminars focused on digital photography and movie making. The institute meets requirements for certification with the Maryland State Department of Education and the North American Division. To download the application, visit www.cuc.edu or call (800) 835-4212 –PR Staff

Religion Department Hosts Keough Lectures

The Department of Religion will host the G. Arthur Keough Lectures on Friday, April 11, at 6:30 p.m. and Sabbath, April 12, at 3:30 p.m. in the H.M.S. Richards Hall chapel. Professors M. Imad Damad, PhD, and Jack Spiro, DHL, EdD, will present two discussions under the theme “Understanding Other Faiths Among Monotheistic Religions” during this free, two-day lecture series. For details visit www.cuc.edu or call (301) 891-4125.

Band Festival Draws Academy Performers

Columbia Union College’s Concert Winds, under the direction of music professor Bruce Wilson, recently hosted the biennial Band Festival. Band Fest, as it commonly known, is an honors program consisting of high school bands that allows students from Adventist academies around the United States to perform at the collegiate level.

CALENDAR

April

5 CUC Choice Awards
6 Service Day
9 Awards Convocation
11-13 Alumni Weekend
11-12 Keough Lectures
13 Tastes of Takoma
15-17 Acro-Airs Home Show
18 Psi Chi Initiation Ceremony
22 Spring Concert
23-24 Student Union Gospel Choir
27-29 College rodeo
May

2-4 Commencement Weekend
31 CUC Sabbath

Why I Do This Work

While writing this, Highland View Academy (HVA) is in the midst of Student Week of Prayer. It started on Monday, and I’ll have to say that particular Monday was one of the worse beginnings to a week I’ve had for some time. By the time the service started midmorning, I was ready to call it a week and go home!

When the students started song service, however, my shoulders began to relax and my breathing slowed. By the third song, I had forgotten the troubles of the day and was experiencing a real sense of peace. The students sounded wonderful, for any day, but especially for a Monday morning! The student speaker gave a wonderful talk, filled with passion and enthusiasm.

About 30 minutes later, by the conclusion of the service, I was a different person. By the time I left, my spirit was lifted and my heart was light. Though I still had some burdens on my heart and some unpleasant tasks for the week, I felt so encouraged. Once again, I realized what an impact Adventist education has on your young people. Once again, I renewed my will to forge ahead.

Once again, I was reminded why I do this work.

Conference Youth Gather to Worship

Nearly 70 youth from across the Chesapeake Conference recently gathered to learn and worship. The youth retreat theme and programming was designed to challenge youth to let God “fill the void” in their lives that social culture entices them to fill with so many other things. The weekend event was a joint effort of HVA and the conference Youth Ministries department.

Guest speaker LaClaire Litchfield

The Gateway is published in the Walter by the Columbia Union College, 7620 Flower Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912 Phone: (800) 835-4212; Fax: (301) 891-4125. www.cuc.edu

Alumni Weekend

Please plan to join us for Alumni Weekend, May 2-4. The fun-filled schedule includes:

Friday: The annual golf tournament will start at 8 a.m., and vespers at 7:30 p.m. at the Highland View church.

Sabbath: Fellowship and Sabbath School will start at 9:30 a.m. in the Administration Building. The divine service will be at 11 a.m. at the Highland View church. The alumni basketball game will finish the day at 8 p.m. in the gymnasium.

Sunday: The weekend comes to a close following the alumni soccer game at 11 a.m.

Plan now to attend. For more information, visit www.highlandviewacademy.com.
School Celebrates Cultural Diversity

The concept of an HVA International Fair originated more than 10 years ago as a way for international students—primarily from Argentina—to acknowledge the successful completion of the English as a Second Language program. Since that time it has grown into an event designed to celebrate the rich diversity of the school’s student body.

The gymnasium was recently transformed again as students and their families created booths to showcase native food, music, and dress, as well as facts about their country of origin. This year 19 countries were represented: Argentina, Brazil, England, Germany, Guam, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, the Philippines, Peru, Puerto Rico, Russia, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago (below), the United States, and U.S. Virgin Islands. Students kicked off the evening event with a parade of flags and then a welcome spoken in their native tongues.

The event is a wonderful way for students to take pride in their heritage and share things about their country with others. “The amount of work the students and parents put into this event is amazing,” said Debra West, dean of girls and event coordinator. “It’s really cool to learn about different cultures,” responded junior Chris Malcolm. Throughout the evening, comments overhead from the crowd included, “Oh, you have to try this, it’s delicious,” or “I’m so full!”

“This was the best international fair yet!” said Jeanne Ramos, a student. Parents Glen Milam (right), residing in Togo, and Chris Hasse (left), residing in the Philippines, were previous fair attendees. “The food, culture, and fellowship were enjoyed by everyone,” relayed Duane Harris, father of HVA freshman Josh Harris. Brian Calhoun, parent of sophomore Jennifer Calhoun, added, “It was a wonderful opportunity to sample food from so many diverse countries!”

Members Lead the Charge for Jesus

Many years ago, Ellen White repeatedly called for a shared evangelistic ministry in which church members and ministers would unite in their endeavors: “The ministers and the church members are to unite as one person in laboring for the up building and prosperity of the church ... All should be laborers together with God, and then the minister can feel that he has helpers in whom it is safe to trust. The minister can hasten this desirable end by showing that he has confidence in the workers by setting them to work.” (Review & Herald, July 9, 1885).

The call for ministry partnership of lay members and pastors has been sounding throughout Mountain View. Church members have joined voices with their pastors in the launch of 50 lay-led evangelistic meetings scheduled for 2008, with the surrounding help of the church’s additional ministries: Sabbath School, visitation, community and health services, etc. Some plant, some water, and some reap, but God gives the increase (I Cor. 3:6-9). This plan has stepped off the pages of theory and onto the stage of action, with conversions and revivals following.

I invite you, by your prayers and financial support, to join us in this united venture to proclaim the message of a soon coming Savior, and the power of His saving grace. What a joy and honor to be laborers together with Him! Don’t deny yourself the privilege of participation.

Member Highlights: Unique Ministries for Christ

James LeVos, Medicine Man - This beloved physician has served Ritchie and Doddridge counties, West Virginia, since 1979, in family practice at two clinics and as medical director at a nursing and rehabilitation center in Harrisville. Valued highly for his skills and compassion, Dr. LeVos (left) also makes house calls, a rarity these days. In the interest of meeting the health needs of the community, he elected to start a new service. Through Appalachian Wellness, LeVos gives free health consultations in homes three days a week. He is pursuing this new dimension of healthcare in addition to performing part-time service at the clinics and rehabilitation center. He voluntarily went on half-pay in order to make his services more accessible to the indigent. However, the medical boards under which he serves have chosen to retain him on full salary, knowing that LeVos’s altruistic service dovetails with the overall intention of what his colleagues are seeking to offer in Appalachia, the best and most readily accessible healthcare for all, regardless of income, mobility, or other delimiting factors.

Pat Ridpath and Chris Hasse, Religious Journalists – Ridpath (right) is known for effortlessly sharing biblical truths with thousands of readers in central West Virginia. The “Pat’s Chat” columnist has also recently been promoting Ellen White’s classic Steps to Christ. Ridpath, a member of the Buckhannon (W.Va.) church, dared readers to be inspired by White’s insight, and directed them to the website www.stepstochrist.us, where visitors can download, read, or listen to the book. Of her regular column, Ridpath states, “Two of the papers were reluctant to pick up my ‘Chat’ but finally did and continue publishing it.” She adds, “God has been good to bring positive comments from many ... a humbling fact that brings prases to God.”

Hasse is a poetess, religious writer, literature evangelist, Bible instructor, organic gardener, and member of the Spencer (W.Va.) church. She writes a regular column titled “Things New and Old” for the monthly, year-old publication Two-Lane Livin’ edited by award-winning journalist Lisa Hayas-Monroy (left), the founder.
Unique Ministries, Cont’d.

Frank Mott, Evangelistic Barber - From the moment Mott (below) opens his barbershop each morning until closing time, “Bible class” is in open session. Over the years, the Lord has taught Mott, a member of the Wirt (W.Va.) church, to skillfully sow seeds that rapidly germinate into open discussions with his customers on life’s most vital issues.

“I go to Frank’s barbershop because he tells you about God and knows what and Whom he’s talking about,” said one regular customer. “Besides giving me good haircuts, he teaches truths I have never heard before!”

Mott’s customers often engage him in discussions about the teachings of the Bible, especially drawing him out on doctrinal and prophetic issues. Over the years, Mott has distributed hundreds of resources to interested customers, most of whom are eager to discuss what they have read.

“Among those who want to discuss the Bible with me are ministry workers, Sunday School teachers, Masons, skeptics, and the list goes on,” explains Mott. “In general, what amazes them most is the tremendous difference between fundamental Scripture truth we look at and the teachings of their church or belief system. Many of them request literature on the subjects we have discussed.” He adds, “Many come back and tell me they are testing out what they have read, yet the majority are still held down by family ties and tradition. But I keep sowing seeds; it is the Lord who gives the increase.”

Nelson Mathers, “Johny Appleseed” - For the past several years, Mathers (right), a retired denominational schoolteacher, has faithfully distributed Adventist literature throughout the town of Elizabeth, W.Va., seat of Wirt County. He does this at his own expense on a relatively limited income. Everyone in town recognizes Mathers as the “Johny Appleseed” of Christian literature, dedicated to sowing seeds of truth daily, and for this service the community respects him highly. Everyone is aware of his Mothers’ Christian Lending Library, and quite a few utilize it.

Recognizing the value of his services, the local public library has donated many books to him, and occasional support comes from people sympathetic to his cause.

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Logan Members, Reaching Out - Members of the Logan (W.Va.) church wanted to accomplish more outreach. A discussion of the ministries already in place revealed that a growing number of families came regularly to the monthly food pantry. “I wish we could do something more spiritual, for them,” said one member.

On the next Monday morning, every automobile that arrived at the church was shown a parking space, and everyone inside invited into the sanctuary to sit comfortably out of the cold. When an informal service started, several participated in the singing and made prayer requests. With each passing month, feedback becomes more personal and spiritual.

One day came about when a member surprisingly asked, “Pastor, don’t you think we should have a prison ministry?” Pastor Linwood St. Clair admits he had been thinking about the same thing, and had even gone to the regional jail to see about it, but nothing had come of it. About a month later, “As I listened to the messages on the church answering machine,” reports St. Clair, “I heard, ‘This is chaplain Goodman at the penitentiary. We are interested in you coming to hold services here.’”

Recently four members of the Logan church held their first Sabbath service at the penitentiary, with about 15 inmates attending. They plan to return on the second Sabbath of each month.

Student Gains Blessings From Puerto Rican Mission

Twenty-seven seniors and sponsors spent eight days in Puerto Rico for their senior class/mission trip. Class member Kylie Wilson (left) reflects on her experience:

“arived in the little valley where the camp was situated. For three days, we painted buildings and doors at the camp during the first half of the day. Sometimes, after we painted, a morning rain would come and wash all our work away and we would have to start again after it dried! During two of the afternoons, we traveled to a nearby beach after our morning’s work. We played in the waves, basked in the sun, and bonded with each other.

Our students have found that as they grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, another great reward is to share that discovery with others. With this in mind, the faculty, staff, and students are committed to restructuring our program for the 2008-09 school year to allow for additional, monthly opportunities of such discoveries—the joy of selfless service and the ministry it provides.

Our desire as an institution is to impact our community for Christ. MVA is excited about the 2008-09 school year and the new opportunities it will present for displaying Christ’s love through both words and actions. We solicit your support and prayers as we continue our journey of discovering how sharing the love of Christ will impact those around us.
Mission Team Builds “Dream” Church in Belize

Her name was Aunt Tillo. She had been in the little fishing village of Placencia in Belize as long as anyone could remember. In fact, she was responsible for delivering most of the people in the village in her role as local midwife. She had become a Seventh-day Adventist at a fairly early age and over the years taught the children of the village about Jesus. In time, a number of these children joined God’s church.

Located on a remote peninsula on the coast, Placencia started to attract attention as a tourist destination because of its white, sandy beaches and wonderful marine life. The little Adventist church grew as well thanks to Aunt Tillo’s efforts. The members met in a little wooden shack (above) situated on part of her land—a very high value in the now-burgeoning tourist town—to the church. Although Aunt Tillo had donated her land, the church had to complete the construction of a church on her land. Aunt Tillo had recently died only months before the MVA group arrived, and the members were determined to see the church completed in fulfillment of Aunt Tillo’s wishes. She had recently donated land—a very high value in the now-burgeoning tourist town—to the church. Although Aunt Tillo died only months before the MVA group arrived, the church was able to complete the project in fulfillment of Aunt Tillo’s wishes.

Working early in the morning and late in the evening to avoid the intense tropical heat, the MVA team was able to complete the roof, walls, and “hurricane ring” of the church in five days, leaving only the roof to be completed. Since the teens and their supervisors accomplished the work quickly, the group was also able to visit the local Mayan ruins of Xunantunich and Altun Ha and do some snorkeling in the warm ocean.

“It was fulfilling,” said Junior Katie Roddy (left), “to build a church that can help fulfill God’s work and someone’s dream at the same time.” The participants came home with a renewed sense of purpose and a greater appreciation for how God works through others.—Tim Soper

The Robbinsville Community church in Trenton knew that their pastor, Art Randall, was being treated for a blood clot in his leg that was creating jaundice, but when the local elders and about 25 members arrived at his home on a Wednesday evening for an anointing service, he relayed worse news. A CT scan revealed a mass on his pancreas with possible spreading to his liver. They anointed the pastor, together with his wife, at 8:30 that evening.

For the next month and a half, the local elders asked the church to pray at 8:30 every evening for their pastor and his family. The conference administration and staff also held him up in prayer each morning. News of Pastor Randall’s cancer spread, and soon family and friends across the United States were also praying. Randall was anointed again two days later.

Soon thereafter, the doctor performed a biopsy of several spots on Pastor Randall’s liver, but all of the results were negative. Later his doctor inserted a stent in his common bile duct. This would open the blocked duct and relieve the jaundice. During the procedure, the doctor expected to find the cancerous mass obstructing the duct, but instead discovered it was only a gallstone. As a result, the next scheduled treatment—a biopsy of the pancreas and the cancerous tissue—were cancelled and an MRI of the affected area scheduled. Randall had the MRI five days later.

The next evening conference administrators came to his house and anointed Pastor Randall yet again. When Randall’s wife, Beth, finally got hold of the doctor the next week, they got the miraculous news: The MRI showed no mass on his pancreas. The cancer was gone! “Somewhere between the CT scan and the MRI, God took care of the problem,” said Pastor Randall. “I believe that God has healed me and still has work for me to do.”

The Robbinsville congregation has a heart for prayer. When the pastor was anointed, they started to pray for him. They continued to pray for him and his family. They continued to pray for God’s healing power on us: not just on one man, but on the entire church, the community, the nation, and the world.—Sandra Covell Dombrowski

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When the Robbinsville congregation got news of his healing, excitement rippled through the pews. “See what God can do for us when we unite in prayer,” church elder Harry Walker testified.

God demonstrated that He wants to bestow His healing power on us: not just on one man, but on the entire church, the community, the nation, and the world.—Sandra Covell Dombrowski

José Cortés
President

The First Pillar: A Movement of Prayer

I believe in the power of prayer. When connected with heaven, we find peace, wisdom, and strength that otherwise—as human beings—we wouldn’t experience. I have received a call from God and the constituents of New Jersey to lead the church in this state. I consider it a great responsibility and an undeserved honor. I know that I need His help; I absolutely depend on Him for everything. I also feel that, in some manner, I depend on each one of you. I need you to pray for me. The mission of the church must be accomplished, but the task is bigger than us.

My first responsibility as your president and pastor begins at 5:30 a.m. every day, when I pray for each New Jersey pastor, teacher, elder, or leader and for my prayer partners. If you want to be on my prayer list, email me at presidentpraying@njcsda.net with your request. This is only for prayer. If you wish your prayer to be included on the conference prayer circle through our website at www.njcsda.org, you need to authorize me to do so.

Jesus is coming soon! I believe that it is not with an army, nor by force, but with God’s Spirit. We need to build a prayer movement—as it was in the times of the apostles—that leads us to a great spiritual revival. “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31, NKJV). We need a prayer movement like nothing ever seen in our conference. Prayer is the first pillar of our ministry.

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First Filipino Celebrates Debt Freedom

During a special church service recently, members of the First Filipino church in Plainfield rejoiced—with jubilant cheers—as the mortgage papers for their first building were burned in a ceremonial act. Paying their debt within one year of ownership, they praised God for the special blessing. “I can now retire,” said outgoing pastor Rudy Bartolome, bringing to mind those trying 18 years as he led the church in massive fundrais- ing so they could have a church of their own. “It’s a dream come true, and to God be the glory!” he exclaimed. He leaves both of his churches, First Filipino and Jersey City Heights English, debt-free.

Conference administrators joined in the celebration. In his message, president José Cortés stressed the five pillars that must hold the First Filipino church: it needs to be the house of prayer, Bible study, evangelism, stewardship, and families. During the afternoon program, visitors from Hungarian, Indonesian, Korean, and other neighboring churches joined them for a concert.—Manny Multalan

Lake Nelson, New Brunswick Host Jewish Outreach

The Lake Nelson church’s Jewish Ministry group enjoys reaching out to their Jewish neighbors. Of the Nations on May 4, a popular Lake Nelson school fundraiser. The Lake Nelson church will be hosting a table for attendees to enjoy tasty Israeli food and meet the ministry members. For more details, or to RSVP for the seder, contact Elayna Moffit at (732) 742-7292 or Christine Oliva at (848) 203-5679.

Ohio Ministry University Provides Hope, Renewal, Practical Ideas

Ohio Ministry University recently brought together nearly 200 lay leaders and pastors from across the conference. They heard presentations by Stuart Tyner (below) on spiritual growth through grace-oriented churches, by Greg and Shasta Nelson (right) on sharing Christ with secular people, and by Monte Sahlin on church growth. They also enjoyed fellowship and discussion groups at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Dublin, a northwest suburb of Columbus.

“I was really blessed and have renewed hope that I want to share,” wrote one participant. “The practical testimonies were excellent,” wrote another attendee. “It was a very stimulating weekend for working to save souls.” A third person wrote, “I’ve challenged me to evaluate myself. How can I be more grace-oriented? How does God want to grow me so I can be more effective for Him?”

Tyner is currently pastor for Family Ministries at the La Sierra University church in Riverside, Calif. He has written a number of books and helped develop many of the Sabbath School materials published by the

Conference Disaster Training

Roy Nelson, Ohio’s Disaster Response coordinator, and Wayne Hancock, EdD, New Jersey’s director of Education, Community Services, and Disaster Response. The joint exercise was intended to model actual operations and issues during a crisis that could be encountered by both management and volunteers alike. Sample donated goods were brought in, sorted, and boxed in accordance with established rules. Other scenarios were played out as well through simulated contact with donors, disaster victims, the media, and local building officials. A previous session was held at the Cherry Hill church in November 2007 where 56 attendees were indoctrinated into the ACS/DR program, which also qualified attendees to serve as general volunteers.—Joseph Luste, PhD

As conference treasurer Jim Greene lights the mortgage papers of the First Filipino church, (left to right) former conference president LaRoy Finck, outgoing pastor Rudy Bartolome, and church treasurer Tina Pastores watch with delight. Photo by Manari Doyle

Ohio Ministry University attendees enjoyed opportunities to interact and dialogue. Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Nelsons are in private practice as career and life coaches in San Francisco. They also lead a ministry called Second Wind, which connects young, urban professionals in a very secular city. Sahlin is the conference’s director of research and special projects.

Many of the participants were especially impressed by Tyner’s presentations and ordered supplies of his new book from Pacific Press, Searching for the God of Grace, to use in small groups and midweek meetings. “Our goals were to help our local church leaders know how to develop a truly spiritual environment in their congregations, and to encourage our churches to move into more effective ministry in the community,” reflected conference president Raj Attiken. “Clearly, we made significant progress on both of these.”

When all of the comments on the feedback sheets were reviewed, not a single individual was entirely negative about the event. About 7 percent of the respondents wrote positive feelings as well as pointing out weaknesses. Four out of five (80 percent) were entirely positive in their evaluation. Nine out of 10 selected the most positive response to the question, “To what extent did we achieve the goals of this event?”

“As local leaders follow through on ideas from this event, we are available to help,” said Sahlin. “We are already working with a number of these churches to help them study community needs and think about what God wants them to do to have a significant impact where they are.” He added, “A strong, Christ-centered spirituality is essential to the success of these efforts.” Plans are being developed for next year’s Ohio Ministry University. Participants are welcome to send suggestions for topics or speakers by writing to Sahlin at montessahlin@gmail.com or calling the conference office.
Worthington Member’s Call to Ministry Affirmed

Pastor Carmen Seibold’s call to the gospel ministry was recently recognized, affirmed, and celebrated at a special service performed at the Worthington church. The service of consecration included a homily presented by Fritz Guy, PhD, research professor of Philosophical Theology at La Sierra University (Calif.), a long-time friend of Seibold and her pastor husband, Loren. In his presentation, Guy highlighted the important, and often unique, role that women played in the life and ministry of Jesus, as evidenced in the Gospel narratives, and in the mission of the first-century Christian church. He drew attention to some compelling biblical evidence for the validation of the ministry of women in our time.

Seibold has been involved in leadership and ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for many years. She holds a Master of Divinity and is currently serving as a hospice chaplain.

The act of consecration, through prayer and the laying on of hands, was particularly moving as Worthington’s ordained elders surrounded Seibold. The conference leadership and several members of the congregation participated in various aspects of the program.

Women’s Ministries Leaders Earn Certification

Early on a recent Sunday morning, at about 4:30 a.m., a tour bus filled with 40 women left Cleveland. The destination was the Concourse Hotel and Convention Center in Columbus, where an all-day Women’s Ministries Leadership Certification Training event was taking place. The Cleveland ladies joined other women from all over the state of Ohio, a total of 120 eager Women’s Ministries leaders.

Leadership courses at the event were intensive, and offered certification on four levels. Many courses had general application, so that leadership skills can be applied beyond ministry to women, such as in the workplace. Topics ranged from “How to Make a Public Presentation” to “How to Reclaim Inactive Members.”

The Women’s Ministries department at the Adventist World Headquarters provided certification criteria, curriculum, and materials, and each participant received a signed certificate upon completion. This training event was the second annual collaboration with Allegheny West Conference (AWC) Women’s Ministries. Last year AWC sponsored the event and invited the Ohio Conference women to participate. This year the roles were reversed, with Ohio Conference serving as sponsor. The sponsorship baton will be passed back to AWC for the 2009 training event.

God Still Does the Impossible

During 2007 six youth groups from across Pennsylvania did what many skeptics viewed as impossible. The youth, aged 8 to 19, from the Hampden Heights, Spanish II, Maranatha, Lehigh Valley Spanish, Meridian Road, and Reading Spanish churches held evangelistic series in their communities. They preached sermons accompanied by PowerPoint presentations. Many wondered if they could take on such a task with so little experience. The truth was that they could not do it alone, but accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, the impossible took place. These young vessels of the Lord spoke with conviction and power. Claiming the promises of God, they went forward in faith.

I must admit that when I was their age, I would not have been willing to be involved in something like this. It seems to me that this generation is different, more willing and more gifted. God’s prophetic word spoken through the prophet Joel appears to be coming true. In Joel 2, God promised that He would “pour out His Spirit on all flesh” before the second coming, which would result in “your sons and daughters” prophesying. I believe this is happening and that Jesus is coming soon. It is His Spirit that enabled the six youth groups to boldly preach God’s Word.

Not only did their messages change the hearts of those listening, but also changed their own hearts; solidifying in their hearts and minds both the truth and reality of God’s Word. At each location, the “impossible” happened and souls were won for God’s kingdom.

Reading Spanish Teens Preach, 16 Peers Respond

Six youth from the Reading Spanish church recently held a weekend evangelistic series proclaiming “Jesus Loves Jeans” to their neighborhood peers. With the help of youth leaders Barbara and Paco Vasquez, the Adventist youth spoke to kids from all sorts of backgrounds. Some already knew Christ. Some just needed a little faith and hope. Others, who knew little about Jesus, got to see him through young preachers.}

Pastor Juan Lopez and his congregation all helped “Jesus Loves Jeans” a reality—praying, affirming, and even helping in the kitchen with food and drinks. Lopez said he was amazed at how God worked on the hearts of audi ences as they responded to the nightly appeals given by the youth. They were not famous evangelists or giving charismatic appeals, yet the power of God worked on hearts, and many people responded,” he recalled.

“After this, we’re not going to be afraid to do anything for God,” exclaimed Fuenmayor (left). The youth will get their chance to do His bidding again this summer, in response to an invitation to hold the series in New England.

—Jalene Torres
Pack your suitcase and get ready for fun and growing closer to God! With five weeks of summer camp at Laurel Lake Camp in Rossiter, there is something for everyone. Children aged 7-10 are invited to Adventure Camp, June 22-29. They can enjoy swimming in the clear-blue waters of the pool, exploring in the Nature Center, riding horses or taking a pony ride, creating a craft masterpiece, jumping on the Aqua Jump, and much more.

Bring the whole crew—mom, dad, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins—to Family Camp, June 29-July 6, and enjoy all that summer camp has to offer. Junior Camp and Teen Camp are both designed for ages 10-12. The weeks of July 6-13 and July 13-20 will feature archery, scouting out camp on the back of a horse, splashing through the Water Olympics at the pool, exploring the trails on a mountain bike, or nailing a cartwheel in gymnastics.

Teens, aged 13-17, are invited to experience adventure, friendship, and God (always in all ways), July 20-27. The week will include jet skiing and water skiing, horseback riding, crafts, and more. Some special highlights will include a memorable teen event. Whether you’re surrounded with new or old friends, a week at camp will be an unforgettable mix of activities, friendships, and God’s love. For more information or to register, visit www.laurellakecamp.com.

More than 380 teenagers recently participated in the Pennsylvania Conference Youth Ministries department in quite a few years. The event was held at Laurel Lake Camp in Rossiter, Pa.

Jennifer Miller, a teacher at the Lehigh Valley school in Whitehall, first brought up the idea to revitalize the event last summer. Plans were soon made and a theme chosen: “Jesus 360°.” Through the theme, leaders hoped to challenge teens to involve Jesus in every area and direction of their lives. Once registration was opened, groups from all across the state started registering. The conference was hoping for at least a hundred to attend, but God thought bigger. More than 90 additional young people were turned away due to limited space at the camp.

Youth Ministries partnered with the conference’s Education department as well as the chaplain’s office of Blue Mountain Academy (BMA) in Hamburg, Pa., to make the retreat a success. As a result, teens from elementary schools, junior academies, BMA, and local church youth groups were involved. Four BMA teens were selected to be the weekend speakers: Justin McAuliffe, Amanda Gomez, David Krajewski, and Myer Rutledge. A team directed by BMA student Emily Ferguson led worship in music. The weekend included worship, the Compass Cafe, an obstacle course, sledding, a three-on-three basketball tournament, an improv comedy team, and a show by BMA’s Aerial Aires gymnastics team. It was a wonderful weekend that proved to be life changing for many.—Kris Eckenroth

The Nevada health team of an NBC affiliate in Roanoke, Va., recently ran a special report on the Rocky Mount Lifestyle Center and two participants of its recent Coronary Health Improvement Project (CHIP) session. The report, presented by WSLS 10 news anchor Karen McNew, aired on the channel’s Friday evening news.

Soon after the report, the center held a graduation for the class at the Rocky Mount church. “We had 18 graduates with an average weight loss of eight pounds in four weeks, as well as clinically significant drops in most risk factors measured,” Kelly noted. “God is good.” Of the 50 attendees, Kelly reported that at least 35 were not affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “They were singing our praises for the wonderful lifestyle changes they made,” recalled Kelly. “We are also having full attendance at the weekly follow-up meetings on Tuesday nights.”

Wood: What is a healthy church?
Miller: A healthy church is one that is characterized by, but not limited to, the following:
1. Church leadership and parishioners who seek to grow spiritually and to be a positive spiritual influence.
2. A membership that experiences numeric growth and can reproduce (plant a new church).
3. A membership that is community-focused, discipleship-trained, and active.
4. Members have a clear direction in terms of mission/vision and values; know where and why they are going, and have a pretty good idea how they are going to get there—faith.
5. Members actively proclaim the three angels’ messages, both locally and globally.

Wood: How do those characteristics translate into action?
Miller: We have prayed, studied, counseled, and read about this. It is the desire of the administration that, in the next five years, 50 percent of our churches will be actively participating in discipleship, and that 50 percent of our churches will show annual growth of 7 percent. If this starts to happen, it will be evident that God’s people are allowing His Spirit to do big stuff through them. It is time that we get on with His mission, not ours.
New Principal Elected

Hannah recently accepted the invitation of the SVA Board of Trustees to become the academy’s new principal, starting in 2008-09 school year. Hannah has 20 years of administrative experience in Seventh-day Adventist boarding schools and is currently the principal of Blue Mountain Academy (BMA) in Hamburg, Pa. Hannah and his wife, Eva, have a daughter attending college and a grown son. They will relocate to New Market, Va., this summer.

As principal, Hannah will work closely with the teachers, staff, and students in all areas of operations to meet the school’s seven objectives. With his special skills of developing strong relationships with these groups, Hannah will provide leadership as SVA continues to grow and improve in all areas. SVA’s current principal, Dale Teweney, PhD, was elected to serve as the school’s president and business manager. Teweney will work closely with Hannah in the overall direction of SVA and give special focus on the institution’s financial development, including new industries.

In announcing the administrative changes for next school year, Bill Miller, SVA’s chairman of the Board of Trustees, said, “SVA is very fortunate to have Mr. Hannah join the SVA team. By all measures, BMA has been one of the most successful Adventist boarding academies for years.” He added, “This reassignment of responsibilities will allow both of these proven leaders to focus on specific areas while working together on our administrative team.”

Renovated Boys’ Dorm Unveiled

The SVA Board of Trustees renamed the dormitory Phanstiel Hall in recognition of the extraordinary financial gifts and support of Howard and Louise (Hart, ’76) Phanstiel. At a time when the boys’ dorm had become nearly unusable, the Phanstiels donated $1 million to jump-start the renovation last summer. This gift was in addition to $800,000 the couple recently donated to finish the remodeling of the girls’ dormitory, Hadley Hall. Everyone at SVA is very grateful for their support and gifts.

Shenandoah Valley Academy (SVA) male students recently became the school’s “men of ‘Stiel” when they moved into their new dormitory, Phanstiel Hall. After seven months of complete remodeling, at a cost of $2.7 million, the new boys’ dormitory is a dream come true. Virtually everything is new except for the walls and roof. There are new built-in closets and dressers, new desks and beds, new bathrooms and laundry facilities, and each floor has its own kitchenette and study room. There is also a new lobby on the third floor, and the entrance lobby had a makeover.

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Mark Finley (right), vice president of the Adventist Church’s Center for Global Evangelism; Barry Black, U.S. Senate Chaplain (below); and Dick Duerrksen of Maranatha Volunteers International are three of the presenters lined up for Potomac Conference Camp Meeting, June 17-21. The renowned Wedgewood Trio will also make an appearance.

New Team Members Join Conference Staff

Crystal Knittel – The conference’s new Communication assistant grew up in Chattanooga, Tenn., and moved to California 20 years ago. She most recently worked for the San Joaquin Community Hospital/Adventist Health in Bakersfield, Calif., as the gift shop assistant. She and husband, Jeff, recently moved back East in August 2007, settling in Penn Lard, Va. Jeff is now the safety manager for Wal-Mart’s Transportation Fleet out of Mt. Crawford. The Knittels have two children: Andrew (20), a sophomore at Southern Adventist University (Tenn.); and Rachel (18), a senior at Adventist University (Tenn.).

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M ilton Church (left) is proud to be part of such a healthy, growing church.

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We Are Staying Put

The first time I really came in contact with the students of Takoma Academy (TA)—since I never had the privilege of attending—was around 1980. A recent graduate of Oakwood College (Ala.), I was a new Potomac pastor. The school called and asked me to speak for Week of Prayer. I was blessed by the experience, sharing with the students my relationship with Christ. Later, while serving as the Takoma Park (Md.) church youth pastor, I got a call to teach at TA. I readily agreed. After teaching one class in 1985, I was asked to join the staff the following year.

Twenty-two years later, I remain at TA because of my love for the students. The faces of our students have changed a lot during that time. They come from Manassas, Va.; Gaithersburg and Columbia, Md.; Northeast Washington, D.C.; and many locations in between. Public transportation is vital to our constituents.

Following lengthy discussions about relocating, the TA Board of Trustees has voted to keep us in Takoma Park. I truly believe this is where God wants us. The area continues to grow and we have a mission here. We still have an influx of students coming from area Adventist elementary schools like Beltsville, G.E. Peters, John Nevins Andrews, and Sligo. Not too far are Olney Prep and Vienna.

We now need to continue focusing on our mission and vision: to provide a spiritual atmosphere for growing young adults, sharing the love of Jesus Christ with each pupil. We must also continue to improve our academic program so that our graduates remain competitive in the community and are prepared for higher education. Finally, we must continue being a school that serves our community, showing—by example—the love of God.

Steps are now being taken to point out the needs and costs for improving our facility. Potomac Conference is committed to TA, and we look forward to building partnerships with other communities to assist us with these needs. Continue to pray for our mission, and that we will remain faithful until the Lord returns.

Alumni Weekend Planned

Takoma Academy always looks forward to inviting its alumni “back home.” Alumni Weekend will start on Friday morning, April 25, at 8 a.m. with the annual golf tournament, started by alumni Dawn (’79) and Bob (’78) Borchers. This year the tournament will be held at the Northwest Park Golf Course in Silver Spring, Md.

Friday programs start at 7:30 p.m. with TA’s Performing Arts groups along with guest performer Dick Stenbakken, EdD, retired director of Chaplaincy Ministries for the worldwide Adventist Church. Stenbakken will perform again for the Sabbath School program.

Former TA principal Richard Osborn (left), current president of Pacific Union College, will be the divine hour speaker.

The basketball competition between alumni and current students will be revitalized during Saturday’s Game Night at 7 p.m.—fun for the whole family. The weekend will conclude at a banquet on Sunday, 3 p.m.

This year’s honor classes are 1948, ’58, ’68, ’78, ’83, ’88, and ’98.
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The Columbia Union Visitor accepts classified advertising as a service to its members. Announcements for Adventist church-sponsored events, legal notices, obituaries, and classified text ads published in the Visitor will be printed without charge on a space-available basis. The Columbia Union Visitor editors reserve the right to edit or decline advertisements of any kind and may reject any text ads to comply with editorial policies. The Visitor also does not guarantee the integrity of any product or service advertised.

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Employment opportunities range over a 50-mile radius. Real estate and personal property taxes tend to be less than the median of Virginia and much lower than the D.C. area, Fredericksburg, Richmond, or Virginia Beach. Community resources include a hospital staffed by local and regional specialists. Many independent and assisted living facilities and nursing homes exist.

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OBITUARIES

BRISTOW, Harvey E., Jr., born June 4, 1941, in Portsmouth, Va.; died Dec. 30, 2007, in Crystal River, Fla. He was a member of the Inverness

Fla. church for eight years and served as an assistant treasurer of Shenandoah Valley Academy from 1964-1966, and as boys’ dean from 1966-1968. Bible teacher/associate pastor at Jefferson Academy, 1968-1970; principal at Fort Worth Junior Academy, 1970-1973; principal at Indianapolis Junior Academy, 1973-1976; principal at Highland View Academy, 1976-1979; Bblk, History, and business teacher at Takoma Academy, 1979-1987, and principal, 1987-1992; chaplain at Washington Adventist Hospital, 1992-2000; and Bible teacher at Greater Miami Academy, 1996-1997. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Ruth Bristow, of Inverness, Fla.; daughters Teresa Kitchell of Mt. Airy, Md., and Carol Higgs of Burlington, Md.; four grandchildren, his mother, Leone Bristow of Calhoun, Ga., his brother, Raymond Bristow of Salem, Va., and a sister, Mary Van Horn of Calhoun, Ga. CALES, Emma Mae Gordon, born September 17, 1922, died December 8, 2007. She was a member of the Christchurch Academy (Va.) church. At 85 years old she was the last of the charter members of the Radford church in Radford, Va.

People First

There were sermons to preach, disciples to teach, banquets to attend. Avid truth-seekers had traveled from afar to hear the Master speak and fellowship with Him. But as soon as He heard of Simon’s mother-in-law’s illness, Jesus turned His back on all and went to her bedside (see Mark 1:29-31). Lunch could wait. Teaching could wait. Fellowship could wait. She came first!

Christ’s method of evangelism was simple: People’s needs took precedence. Before denouncing sin or preaching the kingdom of heaven, He first healed their infirmities, fed their hungry, and raised their dead. And the greater their need, the more tender His touch. Even with our modern scientific enlightenment, there is great evidence that people still have needs:

- An excess of 8 million people die annually as a result of poverty.
- 33.2 million people are currently living with HIV, and 2.5 million of them are children under 15.
- Roughly one-sixth of the world’s population lives on less than $1 per day.

This is disheartening, but until the Lord appears in the clouds and forever declares, “It is finished!” people will always have needs. Diseases will continue to roam rampant. Children will die of AIDS, and cancer will conquer the world. People in poverty-infested nations will continue to be malnourished. People who seemingly have everything will suffer from depression and hopelessness. Day by day we can expect to see sin’s prevailing darkness deepening its grip on our communities. The question is, for Jesus, what is our number one priority? For what do we rush out? How can we do all these things and our church thrive?

Follow the Leader

Christ left us countless examples. From changing water to wine in Cana, to inviting the thief on the cross to His Father’s kingdom, the focal point of His ministry had been meeting the needs of communities. As His followers we are also called to be a beacon of hope, to develop a connection with our communities, to mingle with them (without compromising our doctrine), to learn what their needs are, and then to meet them.

So this year, before we go out and invite them to our Revelation seminars, our tent efforts, or our Bible studies, let’s put people—and their needs—first.