EXPERIENCE THAILAND: BRECK LANG’S BLOG & MINISTRY IN BEOTA

[find the story on page 10]
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January 27, 2013 » 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. » Georgia-Cumberland Conference Office

Billy Weeks has worked as a journalist for more than 28 years. His career started with The Chattanooga Times in 1984 as a staff photographer. In 1995, he became the photo team leader, and from 1999 until 2010, he was the director of photography/graphics at the Chattanooga Times Free Press. Weeks has also been an adjunct instructor in photojournalism at Southern Adventist University for the last 25 years and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

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WEBSITE BASICS

Getting Your Images Online

January 27, 2013 » 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. » Georgia-Cumberland Conference Office

register online at www.registration.gccsda.com
I enjoy flying a stunt kite, with colorful, nylon fabric stretched on a frame of fiberglass and carbon fiber. But what makes a stunt kite unique is not its appearance, but how it is controlled—with not one line, but two (the more advanced have three or four). This allows the flyer to actually control the kite’s direction, not just getting the kite to go “up,” but to turn it left and right, executing spins and stalls, and then connect simple maneuvers into more complex tricks and stunts.

All of that takes practice—and many failed attempts. Usually when the lines are twisted, I can untwist them “on the fly.” But there are times when I spin the kite in the wrong direction, actually making the problem worse. When I’ve exhausted my own solutions, I’ll land the kite (if it hasn’t crashed already!) and enlist some kind friend or stranger to help me untwist the lines. What a difference that makes—the kite is now more responsive. I’ve been given the gift of a fresh start.

So it is in life. There are times when the lines get so tangled that we need a fresh start. Notice how Jesus responded to Peter at such a time. After brave promises, Peter not only ran from the garden where Jesus was arrested, but later publicly denied that he even knew Jesus. After the resurrection, the next time Peter and Jesus talked, Jesus simply asked, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” (John 21:15, NKJV). No harsh words of criticism or rebuke, but a chance to affirm love and renew a relationship.

At the beginning of this new year, do you feel the need for a fresh start? Are you painfully aware of your failures to follow Jesus completely, to obey Him fully, to honor Him as Lord of your finances and your life? Listen to Him now. He doesn’t embarrass or humiliate you. He does not ask for your resolutions, your recommitments, or your promises to try harder this year. He only asks for your love. If you truly love Him, your attitudes, choices, and behaviors will change.

Thank you, Lord, for a fresh start with You.

Yours and His,

Ed Wright is president of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference
STEWARDSHIP: YOU’LL NEVER RUN AGAIN

In previous Unity Run 5k races, I had been able to run at an adequate pace to finish close to the top three in my age group. This year was a different story. I had sustained a life-threatening injury that left me with crushed vertebrae in my back, collapsed lungs, broken ribs, and a broken nose. My back was now held together with two titanium rods and 10 screws. In addition, my lung capacity had been severely compromised.

On the day of the race, I found myself gathering with hundreds of other runners at the starting line. I had mixed feelings as I stood awaiting the starting gun. Thoughts crowded my mind as I anticipated the rush of dashing forward, competing for my space to run. I was unsure of my endurance and questioned if I could run the distance, but my goal was to finish the race and do it in under 40 minutes.

Finally, the signal sounded and the race was under way. I deliberately set a slow pace so I could run a longer distance. I ran the first length and turned right at the first corner. I felt fairly good and kept running, heading toward the big hill. Nearly out of breath and after walking the hill, I continued at a slower pace through the downtown maze of roads and darted for the finish line, my wife, Vivian, cheering as I crossed the finish line just a few seconds past my 40-minute goal.

After catching my breath, I was informed by my wife that one of the trauma doctors had told her months earlier that I would never run again. I have resolved, by the grace of God, to be a living testimony that “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26, NKJV).

Mitch Hazekamp is stewardship/trust services director

FINANCIAL REPORT

The figures below provide an overview of conference finances as of Nov. 30, 2012. Every member who is cooperating with God in the faithful stewardship of tithes and offerings makes our ministry and outreach possible. Thank you for your faithfulness!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012 (47 weeks)</th>
<th>2011 (48 weeks)</th>
<th>Gain/Loss</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tithe</td>
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<td>$34,143,687</td>
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<td>Conf. Ministries</td>
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<td>World Church Giving</td>
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<td>$920,711</td>
<td>-$29,910</td>
<td>-3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Nigerian Church of Atlanta became the 163rd church in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference on Dec. 8, 2012. Rev. 14:6 is being realized as peoples from “every nation, tribe, language and people” join! Not only are we called to “go into the entire world” (Matt. 28:19), but we also see the world coming to us. Our conference is seeing an increasing number of new groups, companies, and churches that are diverse in language and culture.

What a joy to see God blessing us with the diversity from Hispanic, Korean, Romanian, Ghanaian, French-Haitian, and now Nigerian members. There are more than 37,000 members in our conference territory and our ethnic diversity easily makes up a third of our membership, with the majority of our ethnic churches made up of younger families.

Increasingly, we see our conference opening its arms to all whom God sends. We are also experiencing the joys and pains that growth brings. Joy in seeing families join us in our mission to win the Georgia-Cumberland territory for Christ. Growth pains from the change that it brings—different languages, traditions, expectations, and the transition of some churches that are changing texture before our eyes. The joys far outweigh any challenges as we see God’s hand guiding and directing us as a corporate church that is preparing to receive our soon-coming Jesus!

“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev. 14:6).

Growing together!

Paul Hoover is vice president for administration/executive secretary
Three years ago, the Georgia-Cumberland Conference Education Department selected a committee to examine the key ingredients of discipleship. This team, made up of pastors and educators, set out to discover the “best spiritual practices” within our conference schools so they could be shared system wide. After prayerful deliberation, the committee was led to focus on the importance of planning. Since planning is essential to many facets of successful education, it only seemed natural for educators to be equally intentional about planning for spiritual activities. To date, three initiatives have emerged as the best spiritual practices around our conference:

**Pastor/Teacher Retreats** || Oaks School in Ooltewah, Tenn., recognized the importance of teamwork between pastors and teachers and began holding an annual retreat for both parties to align spiritually. This practice keeps their spiritual theme on the forefront throughout the year. In an effort to duplicate this concept around the conference, each spring, every GCC school is provided a professional development day for spiritual planning, which is funded by the Ministerial and Education departments in alternating years. It has been enthusiastically embraced.

**Worship Bags** || At A.W. Spalding School in Colleageale, Tenn., first-graders are provided with worship bags to take home each week. The bags are filled with age-appropriate materials that enable the children to be catalysts for family worship. The results have been overwhelmingly positive, with surveys reporting 100 percent participation. One parent shared this comment:

> I just wanted to drop a note to let you know how much our family appreciates the devotional bags that you have sent home with our children. They enjoy reading a special book for a week, and they take turns with the toy. It has added variety to our devotional time. As a parent, I am always thinking of ways to keep the kids interested, and you have helped. I commend you for seeing a need and doing something about it. Thank you for stepping out and helping to facilitate a more spiritual environment for our children, not only at school, but at home. You are in our daily prayers! Keep working for HIM!

**Family-Driven Weekly Chapels** || Tri-City School in Gray, Tenn., has partnered with families to provide the weekly chapel programs. The concept behind this plan is to further students’ spiritual growth through family planning and peer leading. Sixty-minute worships are led by a combination of parents and students. They are flexible in nature, but include worship and praise time and a scripture-referenced talk or object lesson. Parents are encouraged to help students choose the songs and lead out in the presentation.

Over time, the discipleship committee intends to accumulate a wealth of best practices developed by our local home/church/school communities that will tip the balance in favor of our children becoming disciples of Jesus.
The Georgia-Cumberland Conference Executive Committee voted to approve the funding of two $5 million dollar endowments, one for Cohutta Springs Conference Center and the other for Georgia-Cumberland Academy (GCA).

Neil Brady, corporate treasurer for the Georgia-Cumberland Association of Seventh-day Adventists, Inc., and associate treasurer for the conference, explained that the endowment funds come from an $8 million dollar maturity trust, $1 million from plant fund reserves, and another $1 million from investment fund reserves.

“The plan is to distribute four percent of the balance each year,” Brady said. “There will be two distributions: $200,000 to each entity per year. We anticipate long-term investments to outperform four percent and to help grow the endowments to help offset inflation.” Brady said this helps the organizations budget accordingly.

The funds for GCA are to be given to worthy students who are conference members.

“There are young people who want to be at GCA right now, but we do not have the funds needed to enroll them,” said Gregory Gerard, GCA principal. “Funds from this endowment will make a life-changing Adventist education possible for children in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference.”

The funds for Cohutta Springs Conference Center are to be used for capital maintenance and improvements.

“The interest generated by this endowment will help Cohutta to preserve its beauty and functionality, as well as prepare for the future with whatever challenges may come,” said Olivier LeMaitre, executive director for Cohutta Springs Conference Center.

“Administration feels these are two institutions that are doing well,” said Kurt Allen, vice president for finance. “The goal is to guarantee a boarding academy and retreat center for future generations. We are asking our constituents to partner with us in giving to these endowments and growing these institutions.”

Stewardship and Trust Services director, Mitch Hazekamp, said of the $8 million trust, “The gift was prompted by love. In this case, it was a large gift because this person had been successful and wanted to pass on a legacy to God’s church.”
What’s Your Story?
CONNECT 2013 | March 1–3
With Pastor Angelo Grasso

CONNECT is a linking point for Adventist students who attend public (and private non-Adventist) universities and colleges. It is also a leadership training time to help students better impact their campuses for God’s glory. Each year, the weekend is sponsored by Adventist Christian Fellowship department of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference in partnership with the Southern Union. The weekend is open to all ACF students from the Union. Questions? Call (865.522.3193) or check our site (acfgcc.org).
Breck Lang is a recent graduate of Southern Adventist University’s School of Nursing. He is currently serving as a medical missionary in a small Thai village where he assists Gayle Haberkam, a nurse who has been serving in that area for several years. The following are excerpts from his blog.

09/18/2012

I made it...safe and sound to Chiang Mai! Twenty hours on a plane is not something that I would ever care to do again, but I am here nonetheless.

09/19/2012

I slept so good last night!! Over 12 hours. It was great. Gayle wanted to make sure I get completely over my jet lag before we head up into the mountains, so we spent today here in Chiang Mai. Let me tell you—today has been a big adventure! I woke up and ate breakfast with Gayle. We had avocado sandwiches and TONS of fruit: mango, dragon fruit, durian, and this other fruit we didn’t know the name of, but it was SO good. I ate so much. Then we got on a tuk tuk (a little three-wheel, open-air taxi thing) and headed to TIGER KINGDOM! I got to go into the cage and pet tigers! The small cats were about the size of a small/medium dog. When you see them in pictures and videos, you just want to pick them up and snuggle them! Not so much in person...the trainers kept telling me to put my head on the tigers while they were growling and looking back at me! It was a little frightening. The big tigers were much less scary because it seemed as though they were given a large dose of Valium or something. They were so sleepy! After that, we went and watched a monkey show, and I got to hold a REAL, LIVE MONKEY! I have literally been waiting for this day forever! Ha ha. It was fun. The rest of the day was spent walking around and taking pictures and eating. It has been a good day!
THAILAND:
BRECK LANG’S BLOG & MINISTRY IN BEOTA
9/25/2012

Beota is a small village of maybe about 50 people. (That could be totally wrong—I’m bad at estimating.) There are about 15-20 homes. The Adventist compound contains a church, the pastor’s home (for when he comes—once or twice a month), Gayle’s home, the home of a family who is involved with the church’s programs, and an ICC building that is available for volunteers.

10/13/2012

The mission here is greater than I have ever experienced. Every single day, we take for granted having the opportunity to know who Jesus is. Did you know that? I never did, until I was looking into the eyes of someone who had never heard the name of Jesus. It BLOWS my MIND that every single day, there are people who can choose if they want to acknowledge God in their lives, and yet so many people choose not to. It blows my mind even more that that person was me for most of my life. There are no words strong enough to explain how lucky you are if you have merely heard the name of Jesus. The Karen are wonderful people, and they have been shot, burned, enslaved, oppressed, and hated. They have been violently forced out of their villages, their homes have been taken over, and with nowhere left to go, they fled to Thailand. They essentially have no home, no belongings, no hope, and no future without knowledge of our loving Savior. Most of them worship a god who cannot hear, cannot love, and cannot care. I am talking to YOU right now, and I want you to prepare yourself for what I am about to say because there is nothing more important that I could say to you than this: Don’t let one more day pass that you don’t acknowledge God in your life.

A synopsis of the last two weeks:
1. Successfully gave stitches twice.
2. Unsuccessfully started an IV.
3. Had my first Thai hospital experience—went on an eight-hour round trip to take a little girl
to the hospital who ended up having a spiral fracture and partially dislocated humerus.

4. Watched three of the passengers on the way to the hospital lose their breakfast...about three times each.

5. Watched someone catch, cook, and eat a real, live frog.

6. Spent my first night in another village.

7. Spoke about the young life of Jesus to a group of listening ears that had never heard about it before. What a privilege!

8. Killed my first snake.

9. Learned a lot more Karen!

10. Passed right by a terrible motorcycle accident. Extenuating circumstances made it so we were not able to do anything except call emergency services. The image of the seemingly lifeless body lying on the ground is permanently engraved in my mind.

11. I woke up in the middle of the night and thought there was a rat on my lap. I sprung up and sent the uninvited guest flying across the room. It was only my iPod.

12. Drove in Thailand for the very first time. Everything is backwards obviously—drive on the right side of the car, left side of the street, shift with the left hand...even the windshield wipers and blinkers are switched.

11/20/2012

I enjoy eating on the floor in candle light, washing the dishes on the front porch, drinking rain water, taking a bath with a bucket of water or in the river, the unavailability of internet access and phone service, going to bed by 8:30 most nights, and waking up with the sun. There is something about living simply that makes me feel refreshed—like I can think more clearly somehow. Fewer distractions, I guess. The easiness of my transition was not even something I really prayed for or wanted. I was kind of expecting it to be hard, and I thought that was what God was preparing me for, so that is what I was ready for. But it turns out I was totally wrong. My experience has not been what I was told to expect at all, but it has been what I needed. It seems obvious that when life gets hard, we turn to God. For He is our “strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1, NKJV).

You can follow Breck’s experiences in Thailand on his blog at http://experiencethailand.tumblr.com/

Breck (right) has made many new friends during his time in Thailand.
I have only known him for five weeks, but I see someone who is a born missionary! He arrived in Thailand on Sept. 17, and we hiked all the way into Beota four days later!

I see him praying and reading his Bible here morning and evening, and I just have to turn away, fall on my face at Jesus’ feet, and praise the Lord with all my heart for sending him here to work with me. His humble, teachable spirit, adaptability, helpfulness, ready smile, and hearty laugh make him completely lovable and a joy to work with.

Already Breck has experienced IVs, suturing, injections, and has helped care for many difficult cases. We complement each other, as I have a lot of experience, and he has a lot of fresh, up-to-date book knowledge!

Most importantly, Breck shares our passion to win souls to Christ. He has Jesus’ love in his heart for these people, and he sees the power of the medical work to win the hearts of the people and open the way to share Jesus with them.
Collegedale Academy’s (CA) senior class embarked on their Senior Survival to Tellico Plains, Tenn., on Oct. 2. The seniors spent five days in the wilderness learning and applying basic survival skills. But survival was not all the seniors walked away with—they brought back the basics on how to survive a “spiritual wilderness” and a new-found respect for their classmates.

The senior class (separated into groups of A, B, and C) went through trust-building initiatives set up by Marvin Thorman, CA math teacher, who coordinates Senior Survival. They used teamwork to get over the “wall;” helped their group through “the web of the world” and into “heaven;” and did a “trust fall” into the arms of their classmates.

Saturday night, after the baptism of one student, the seniors brought testimonies to the bonfire. Senior after senior stood and shared. Personal stories, confessions, and tears were shared as the students asked God to enter their lives. The Holy Spirit swept through many hearts and returned to CA with the seniors.

“Since becoming a Christian, I have never seen the Holy Spirit poured out like it was at Senior Survival,” said David Sherwood, CA religion teacher. “The students have made decisions to seek after God whole-heartedly, or not. Some have been baptized, some are soon to be baptized, and some have serious doubts and objections. The great controversy is being played out in the open now in the classrooms and hallways of CA.”

Before Senior Survival, cliques, gossip, and prejudice were common within the senior class; the underclassmen were surprised at the transformation. For seniors, the days following Senior Survival were spent speaking to the rest of the student body. Many visited religion classes and shared, and a week of prayer was given, where seniors told their stories.

“This year’s Senior Survival will go down in my mind as one of the most awesome displays of God’s life-changing power,” Thorman said. “Our work, though, has just begun. There is still a great need of prayer and effort to help keep the revival alive. Not only has this Senior Survival been one of the most powerful spiritually, it has also unleashed some of the greatest spiritual struggles in the lives of our students.”

CA’s seniors now brave their spiritual wilderness, and solicit your prayers.
Until recently, the Eden Valley Foster Care Mission was fully connected to the power of God, yet not to the Tanzanian electrical power grid. With the nearest connection more than 25 miles away, Janet Fournier, mission director, had been looking for another method. Over several years, she worked with supporters to raise funds and with Jay Anders, a professional electrical engineer and lay pastor at the East Ridge Church near Chattanooga, Tenn., to design a hydro power plant that could harness the power of a small river on campus.

Anders and a dedicated team comprised of seven members of the East Ridge Church made plans to go on site to help build the hydro plant including a small weir, powerhouse, and a battery room. The team arrived on the campus Oct. 8 and began working the next morning. They started each day with a devotional time, sharing the ways God provided wisdom and insight. His help was obvious from the beginning.

In Atlanta, all the team’s bags were checked in and considered less than 50 pounds, despite the fact that several of them were in excess of that weight limit. The group was bringing several items needed to complete the project—equipment that would not be available in Tanzanian marketplaces—and as the items were cleared through Tanzania customs, the agents allowed the bags to pass through without paying any import fees. To the group, this was a clear act of God.

When the group surveyed their equipment, they discovered the inverter, a key component brought from the U.S., was inoperable. After much prayer and thought, the team was not only able to discover the source of the problem, but they were also able to repair the broken component and return the inverter to service.

The group continued to be blessed as they worked throughout the week. More than a mile of cable was placed across the campus to ready the buildings for electrical power, and God continually ensured the proper size and length of cable was on site for the team at the needed time. By the end of the 10 days, all four hydro generators were operating to charge the batteries and supply power to lights in every building on the 40-acre campus. The system also supplied hot water for the staff and students. Additionally, Bruce Chesnut led efforts to build and install cabinets in the mission director’s home. The team also brought supplies to restock the medical/dental clinic.

“God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect” (2 Sam. 22:33, NKJV).
The Women’s Fall Retreat, held Oct. 5-7, took ladies to the coastal scenery of St. Simons Island, Ga., and encouraged them to “renew, refresh, restore.” More than 170 women attended the weekend event.

“We’re having a wonderful time. It’s peaceful and relaxing,” said Gale Fallin, member of the Moultrie, Ga., Church. “It’s been really, really good. We’re just having a great time.” Fallin said this was her third Women’s Retreat, and she continues to attend because “it’s refreshing—it just revives me!”

This year’s guest speaker was Wanda Davis, senior staff chaplain for Florida Hospital East Orlando. Davis’ engaging personality was well-received by the women.

“The speaker makes you laugh and cry at the same time—she’s great,” said Pat Huey, member of the Standifer Gap Church in Chattanooga, Tenn. This was Huey’s first time attending a Woman’s Retreat. “I love it. It’s been a blessing.”

Throughout the meetings, Davis encouraged the ladies to embrace their Heavenly Father’s care and to find security in Him.

“[I want women to see] how much God loves them,” Davis said. “If they would only know what He thinks about them and believe it.

Davis said retreats like this one play a vital role in women’s spiritual lives.

“It’s important for women to come hear women and see the Scriptures from a woman’s perspective,” she said.

The time away is exactly what many need to reconnect with one another and with God.

“I come to restore myself, to refresh myself and just to have a sense of camaraderie among women,” said Mitzie James, member of the Stone Mountain, Ga., Church and regular Women’s Retreat attendee. “I love the theme because we really need to refresh ourselves. We give so much of ourselves every day, and we need to take time to reflect upon God, to reflect upon the directions that He’s taking us in, and just be aware of His voice and draw closer to Him. That’s what I’m here for.”
CHATTANOOGA FIRST HOSTS HEALTH EXPO
» written by Jessica Spears | photos by Melinda Helton

Around 80 individuals from the Chattanooga, Tenn., community participated in the annual Health Expo at Chattanooga First Church on Sunday, Sept. 9. Participants could visit a variety of health-themed booths, which included free health screenings, such as cholesterol and blood sugar. In addition, several area organizations, including Wildwood and the Adventist Book Center, provided materials and information on healthy cooking.

The MaryEllen Locher Breast Center provided information for a booth and free mammograms. Through the use of creatively themed hats, the Center provided a short information session on the reasons many women avoid having a mammogram.

“This is such a fun way to teach women about the importance of mammograms,” said Joyce Weaver, while wearing one of the hats and laughing.

Participants sampled a variety of vegan foods, made by Dovie Wilson and Dolly Hocking. “I cannot believe how delicious this food is,” said one participant, who had never visited an Adventist church before. “I would not have known it was vegan.”

Several who sampled the foods promptly signed up for cooking classes at the church.

After visiting the booths, Ben Phaltinsky and Ryan Bowman, both physician assistants and Chattanooga First members, reviewed results with each participant and provided a real health age.

Several individuals saw advertisements for the expo while leaving their own church services that morning and decided to attend the event.

“A nurse from another church not only participated at the various booths, but asked for more information on our faith,” Hocking said.

Children’s activities, organized by Mary Ann Poulson, focused on educating children on the importance of healthy living. Fourteen children participated in these activities, which included arts and crafts, a puppet show, exercise, and a tour of a Chattanooga Fire Department truck.

A special thanks went to Deborah Taube for promotions, Rob and Nick Helton for audiovisual work, Bruce Jacobs for his television broadcast, and all booth volunteers.

The Health Expo, sponsored by the Health and Temperance Committee, was the first of many health-based events that were held at the church. The community was also invited to attend free vegetarian and vegan cooking classes throughout September and October.
After 10 years, the Greater Atlanta congregation had reason to celebrate: They became a formal church. Each person who entered the church on Sabbath, Oct. 27, was given a color-coded rose to commemorate the occasion.

“It has been very challenging, but it is the greatest thing that God could do for me,” said Shelbert Gaines, lay pastor. “I have grown more than when I was sitting in the congregation.”

Ed Wright, Georgia-Cumberland Conference president, shared a story in his sermon about a town in Minnesota where each person had a number to paint on a painting that looks like a giant stained-glass window.

“It is because every one of you was faithful in painting your little piece that we are here today to take this next step and say Greater Atlanta is no longer a company,” Wright said. “By God’s grace, by our collective experience and commitment and vision, we stand here today ready to take this step.”

The journey for the Nigerian Church of Atlanta began in June 2005. Seven and a half years later, on Sabbath, Dec. 8, members and friends of the church—including Nigerian community members and fellow Nigerian Adventists from across the country—gathered for a special organization service.

“A huge blessing today is] the coming together of different people from different cultures—the same nationality but different dialects—and being able to walk toward one common goal, and that’s to bring people to Christ. That was the purpose of putting this church together,” said Christopher Owolabi, church treasurer and a charter member.

Conference president Ed Wright addressed the congregation in a sermon where he encouraged them to continue growing and working hard, evangelizing, and reaching out to each other and their community.

Under the pastoral leadership Gabriel Boakye-Dankwa, the church is now raising funds for their own church building, where they can continue carrying out their vision “to be a church that is mission oriented and committed to spreading the gospel to all people.”
On a cool Sunday afternoon, Nov. 4, a crowd began to gather at Collegedale Adventist Middle School. The occasion was the first Sandy Erickson Race for Christian Education for the Greater Collegedale School System (GCSS) [comprised of AW Spalding Elementary (AWS), Collegedale Adventist Middle School (CAMS), and Collegedale Academy (CA)]. The atmosphere was buzzing with 515 race participants, nearly 100 parent and community volunteers, race day snacks available by the Collegedale Church Pathfinders, and a live contemporary Christian band from the Hamilton Community Church.

GCSS held the event as a fund raiser for the system’s worthy student fund, while honoring a beloved first-grade teacher, Sandy Erickson, who lost her battle to ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) in 2010. Erickson’s family attended and participated in the race-day festivities. Richard Erickson, her husband, gave an impromptu, emotional word of thanks to the crowd.

“Sandy would be so proud that so many students are being helped and supported by this event,” he said.

Other family that participated in the race were the Ericksons’ son and daughter-in-law from Washington state, Jonathan and Nicole Erickson, and their son, who was pushed in a stroller. Also, Erickson’s cousin Nancy Camara, from Birmingham, Ala., and Erickson’s mother, Freda Blanchard, participated in the fun run. During the award ceremony, Blanchard awarded all the medals to the winners.

The first part of the event was the 1k Fun Run for students in pre-k through second grade and those wanting to run/walk a shorter distance. As “On your mark, get set, go” was announced, tiny feet began running around the school building. Crossing the finish line first was Avana Im, a third grader at AWS.

“This first year of the Sandy Erickson Race was so exciting,” said Stacie Schepers, lead teacher for the Montessori Early Childhood Center located at AWS, who ran with her students. “Even my young students were geared up and couldn’t wait to run. We had a great time for a wonderful cause.”

continued on page 25 [see ERICKSON]
On Oct. 23, Joshua Woods, pastor of the Oglethorpe Church and School, set a new marathon record of five minutes! Perhaps he didn’t run a full 26.2 miles, but he certainly had the cheering and support as if he had.

The students at the school had been planning to honor him and his wife that day for Pastor Appreciation Month. Their theme was running since they knew Woods had been training to participate in a marathon on Oct. 21. Unfortunately, instead of running the real marathon the Sunday before, Woods had spent the day in bed, recuperating from a severe bout of the flu.

Students made sure he got to run anyway. They planned a “marathon” course around the school’s gymnasium, with stops at every “mile” for a water bottle, PowerBar, piece of chocolate, or some other treat. At the end, they gave him a medal and a trophy saying “#1 Pastor.” They also led him to a special table and served him and his wife a traditional southern meal.
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Women’s & Teen Girls’ Spring Retreat
March 15-17, 2013 || Cohutta Springs

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Recognizing that the freedoms they have today were fought for by brave men and women yesterday, students from the Bowman Hills School and OAKBOW band honored local veterans on Nov. 12.

“We want to instill in our children that freedom comes with a cost,” said Bowman Hills principal Matt Korp, “and we should be thankful for those willing to sacrifice to maintain and preserve it.”

Though this was the first year Bowman Hills hosted such a program, it was the second year for the OAKBOW band, made up of students from the Bowman Hills School in Cleveland, Tenn., and Ooltewah Adventist Kindergarten and School (OAKS) in Ooltewah, Tenn.

Along with patriotic songs performed by the band, a couple fifth graders presented a reader’s theater on what a veteran is, and several seventh and eighth graders shared poems they had written, revealing that they had spent time contemplating the sacrifices made. Younger students also participated by making cards for the veterans.

“I thought really hard to make a card because I wanted it to be perfect,” said fourth grader Skylar Barnes, whose great-uncle was one of the veterans in attendance. “It’s really cool to have an uncle that served in the army.”

Vietnam veteran Bruce Hopson, whom the students affectionately call “Uncle Bruce,” spoke for the event, making note of some highlighted accomplishments of local vets, including one Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, John Warren, whose grandson—and namesake—is in pre-k at the school.

“I left feeling proud to be an American,” said Richard Center, a veteran who attended the program. “I’m happy for young people to recognize what has taken place in this country and happy to hear them share patriotic words of their own thoughts and the history that has happened in this country.”

The OAKBOW band, directed by Wes Bradford, performs patriotic songs during the Bowman Hills School’s Nov. 12 event to honor veterans.
Southern Adventist University nursing major Morgan Aumack, member of the Collegedale Church, has been involved with the SonRise Resurrection Pageant since she was seven years old. SonRise is a free, large-scale reenactment of Christ’s final days leading to his death and resurrection. It takes place in Collegedale, Tenn., during Easter weekend and is open to the community.

Aumack began her involvement in SonRise as a dancing girl who celebrated as Jesus walked through the marketplace. After several years in that role, she became a Roman soldier on horseback. Next, she helped with her parents’ booth in the marketplace. Then she was asked to act as Gabriel in the Gethsemane scene. She played Gabriel for two years, during which she says SonRise became deeply personal.

“As I was playing that part, I realized how painful it was for the angels in heaven to watch Jesus suffer and die,” Aumack said. “I remember wanting to end His suffering and just putting my all into the part, trying to give the Jesus actor all the strength that he needed.”

After playing Gabriel, Aumack was asked during her freshman year of college at Southern Adventist University to play Mary Magdalene and to be the assistant director for the Gethsemane scene. If she had felt moved playing Gabriel, the first year she played Mary she was absolutely overwhelmed.

“I’ve never cried as much as I did playing Mary,” she said. “I felt like I was literally back in time watching Jesus die. It made me look at my life and see all the heinous things that I have done, but yet I was comforted knowing that even though I am a pathetic sinner, He still died for me and forgave me.”

This year, Aumack will be the main director of the Gethsemane scene and hopes to play Mary again. Although she is involved with many activities, SonRise is the highlight of her year, helping her focus on what is important and lead others to Christ. Her favorite scene in SonRise is also the scene she is most eager to see in real life: the resurrection.

“At the resurrection scene, it all came together for me—the plan of salvation, the suffering, the pain, the anguish, the reason why he went through all of that, and the love he has for me,” she said. “Everything combined to reveal to me what an amazing God I am privileged to serve and love, who loves me right back even more than I can ever know.”

This year’s SonRise Resurrection Pageant will be held on March 30. To learn more, visit www.comeseejesus.com.
Last summer when the Cleveland, Ga., Church held their vacation Bible school, Sam Pomianowski participated as one of the characters in the outreach program. At that time, Pomianowski was serving as the assistant director for AFCOE (Amazing Facts Center of Evangelism) in India.

That July, Pomianowski extended an invitation to Jair Pinilla, pastor of the Cleveland Church, to hold an evangelistic series for two weeks in Ibrahim, India. Pinilla and David Palmer, a church member, accepted the invitation.

After 25 hours of traveling, the men arrived at Hyderabad International Airport, where they were greeted by Samuel Nanavarapu, a pastor who had recently been serving as the special events translator, translating from English into the local language of Telegu. Nanavarapu also serves as Sabbath school teacher for Hope TV India.

As a result of the evangelistic meetings, four people have been baptized so far, and another 15 will soon follow. They give all glory to God.

One of the Indian conferences has asked Pinilla and Palmer to return next year to conduct another evangelism campaign; the two are praying about it. India is becoming a vast mission field because there is a great need of evangelists and pastors. Please pray that the Lord of the Harvest will send more laborers.
AREA WILL CLINICS are planned for many areas throughout Georgia and Tennessee in 2013. This is a service provided for you from the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. The conference will pay for proper, attorney-drafted documents at no cost to members. The provided estate plan includes a will, a medical power of attorney, and financial power of attorney; revocable living trusts are available at a discounted cost.

AREA WILL CLINICS COMING SOON

February 17 (Sunday) Augusta Church (Augusta, Ga.)
February 18 (Monday) Gainesville Church (Gainesville, Ga.)
March 3 (Sunday) Conyers Church (Conyers, Ga.)
March 4 (Monday) Peachtree City Church (Sharpsburg, Ga.)
March 10 (Sunday) Douglasville Church (Douglasville, Ga.)
March 17 (Sunday) Marietta Church (Marietta, Ga.)
March 24 (Sunday) Duluth Church (Duluth, Ga.)
March 31 (Sunday) Atlanta Belvedere Church (Decatur, Ga.)

Clinics are by appointment ONLY. Please contact the conference office to schedule an appointment at a church near you. Call 800-567-1844, ext. 361, and speak with Cherie.

Thirty minutes later the 5k began. Students from third through twelfth grade, parents, teachers, coaches, community members, and race lovers lined up in the starting chute.

“It was fantastic to see so many familiar faces all in one place coming together for our school system’s worthy student fund,” said Rick Stern, parent and representative for PM Pediatrics, title sponsor for the race.

“We’ve been talking for a long time about hosting a community event that, in addition to raising funds for our school system, would also bring our community together. Due to the hard work of our race committee, the support of the Erickson family, many who had a connection with Sandy, and the hard work of our students and parents, we had an unprecedented first time event,” said Murray Cooper, Greater Collegedale School System head administrator.

The efforts of the race committee, lead by volunteer Nora Moody and comprised of Chad Nash, Brooke Hold, Bob Benge, Dave Ketelsen, Jeff Guild, Kelly Myers, and Lisa Goolsby, were rewarded: The event raised $35,000 profit. Many students in the GCSS will benefit from these funds, and several students will be able to remain in the GCSS because their bills will now be supplemented.

“We’ve had very successful fund-raisers in our school system, but this is the first time we’ve profited an amount like this,” Moody said. “First and foremost, we praise the Lord for the success. We are so grateful to the Erickson family, each sponsor, every student and family who raised funds, and to each volunteer who gave so willingly of their time. It takes a community to pull off this kind of event, and it makes our community more bonded together. We have been already begun planning next year’s race. Save the date for Nov. 3, 2013!”
Technology is a useful tool for connecting people to their far-away family and friends. This is the goal of Georgia-Cumberland Academy’s (GCA) live streaming service.

GCA’s IT department records and live streams several events, from basketball games and weeks of prayer to drama, choir, and band performances. To accomplish this, the Computer Helpdesk, a department made up mostly of student employees, has a crew at each event to operate cameras, run a video switching board, and mix the audio.

This marks the fourth year that GCA has streamed events. The first couple of years involved a lot of testing and experimenting.

“Streaming started as a novelty and has now become a depended-on ministry that we do here at GCA,” said Ernest Staats, IT director.

The streaming ministry allows for families to connect with their student(s) even when they can’t attend in person. Mark and Barbara McKinney were not able to attend the National Honor Society induction service that included their son Caleb. However, the McKinneys watched the service online.

“Thank you all for allowing us to virtually be there,” said Mark McKinney.

Others have also repeated similar stories and expressed gratitude.

“The streaming program provided by GCA is professionally done and extremely beneficial,” said Marsha Claus, parent of GCA junior Eric Claus. “With family living all across the country, the opportunity to watch streamed activities helps them feel a closer connection with Eric and his school life.”

Georgia-Cumberland Conference events held on campus have also been streamed—most recently, the Choir Festival Concert. More than 190 constituents from across the conference were able to watch their elementary students perform.

The technology has provided an exciting opportunity for others to be involved in the programs on the GCA campus, and it continues to improve as the streaming crew strives to enhance the quality of the service.

A schedule of events and live streaming is available at http://live.gcasda.org.
High School Retreat is a great Bible conference event for Adventist students, grades 9-12, not attending Adventist schools to step out of the day-to-day routine and listen to God’s voice, relax, and be refreshed.

with guest speaker **Matt Smith**

**FEB. 1-3, 2013 @ COHUTTA SPRINGS YOUTH CAMP**

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**QUESTIONS?**

Contact GCC Youth Ministries @ 800.567.1844, ext. 346, or email alyse@gccsda.com

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Also featuring Phyllis Washington, NAD Children’s Ministries

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JESUS LOVES ME
( Helping Children Know, Share & Love This Truth)
Growing up in a suburb of Los Angeles, Calif., Dean Read was nurtured by his grandparents as they took him to their Methodist church on Sundays. It was during his college years that a classmate invited him to attend a local Adventist church. Read was incredibly impressed by their understanding of the Bible, and at the age of 22, Read was baptized at the Downey-Florence Seventh-day Adventist Church in Downey, Calif.

He had wanted to be a pastor, even while he was a teenager, but he felt ill prepared.

“I didn’t grow up Adventist, I didn’t know the Bible as well as they did,” Read said.

So Read began a career as a public school teacher in Los Angeles, experiencing the riots and earthquakes while growing in the faith. His wife, Tracie, continually encouraged Read to act on his calling. She returned from a mission trip with news of a subsidy that would make them step out in faith and head to seminary.

After finishing seminary in 2007, Read received a call to the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. He saw God’s leading because “it was a call to probably the best conference and one of the best district areas we could go to.”

On Nov. 10, 2012, members from both his churches—Brunswick and Camden—joined together in recognition of Read’s calling to the ministry in a celebration of ordination at the Camden Church in Kingsland, Ga.

“This ordination is a confirmation of a life experience, even as a child, always knowing the love of Jesus and always wanting to do His will. Now I’m in the church, and I actually got to go to a Seventh-day Adventist school for the first time in my life, which was seminary,” Read said. “This part of the process completes everything I’ve been doing, and I can go forward with confidence to be a pastor for Him, trying to win souls and encouraging people to walk with Him. It’s my dream come true.”
One of our favorite things at Cohutta Springs Conference Center is meeting new guests and catching up with returning ones. More than 35,000 people walk through our doors every year, and while we appreciate each one, there are some who stand out as exceptional.

During the week of Nov. 13, Cohutta had the pleasure of welcoming several new and returning guests who were attending the Adventist CHIP Association Summit.

A first-time visitor to Cohutta, Tim Beckett is the CHIP director from Monroe, OH.

“It’s just beautiful, and the facility is fantastic! Better than any other Adventist facility I have seen of its kind,” Beckett said. “Being here for this weekend has been a real blessing. The prayer walk is very meaningful to me. It is a beautiful place to reacquaint yourself with God in a natural setting... I’m going to have to let my church youth group know about Cohutta.”

Returning guest Cathy McCrain lived at Cohutta for six years while her husband was the wildlife director from 1996-2002. Now a resident of Pensacola, Fla., McCrain said she enjoyed returning and “going on the trails, hiking around the lake, and the quietness and beauty.” She also loved the new addition to the dining room and outdoor fireplace.

First-time visitor Tina Steenmeyer works for the Alaska Conference as the director of the Alaska Bible School.

“My very first impression was WOW! I was absolutely in awe!” Steenmeyer said. “The serenity, to be able to walk out into God’s country...the outdoors are a reflection of who He is. I am coming back; there is a group of us from Alaska who would like to come to Cohutta Springs.”

The common thread among guests was the idea of being blessed—by the peace and serenity of the surroundings, by the spiritual experience they have in God’s nature, and by the facility. What guests don’t realize is that while they are being blessed, they are blessing the staff of Cohutta. We thank God for our guests, both new and returning. ■
## CONFERENCE EVENTS

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**OFFERING SCHEDULE**

### JANUARY
- **05** Local Church Budget
- **12** Georgia-Cumberland Conference Ministries
- **19** Local Church Budget
- **26** NAD/Religious Liberty

### FEBRUARY
- **02** Local Church Budget
- **09** NAD/World Budget/Adventist Television Ministries
- **16** Local Church Budget
- **23** Georgia-Cumberland Conference Ministries
March 23, 2013  Dalton, GA

Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
255 Conference Road NE
Calhoun, GA 30701