GOD IN SHOES STEPS IT UP
HOW THIS HANDS-ON MINISTRY IS EXPANDING ITS REACH
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COVER PHOTO » A God in Shoes volunteer provides a manicure during one of the spa
day events held in Orlando, Fla., on Sept. 26, 2014, as part of the North American Division
Women’s Convention. Photo by Julio Muñoz.

Communiqué is the official newsletter of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
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EMPOWERING GOD’S PEOPLE

COMING SPRING 2015

February 21
Collegedale Community Church, Ooltewah, Tennessee

February 28
Knoxville First Church, Knoxville, Tennessee

March 21
Atlanta Metro Hispanic Church, Norcross, Georgia

March 28
Macon, Georgia
As a child growing up in Hawaii, I was fascinated by the stories I heard about Father Damien and the leper colony on the island of Molokai. While I was never allowed to visit, my parents made the treacherous descent to the community of Kalaupapa several times, each time returning with more stories that touched my childish heart. It was only as an adult, however, that I learned more about Father Damien and his ministry to the sufferers of the chronic infection now known as Hansen’s disease.

Jozef de Veuster felt called to serve the outcasts of this quarantined community, cut off from the rest of the island not only by the rugged cliffs above, but by the fear of the disease below. By his own choice, Father Damien moved to this community in 1873 and lived there for 16 years. He learned the people’s language, bandaged their wounds, and embraced the bodies that no one else would touch. He organized schools and choirs, built houses for those without shelter, constructed a reservoir, and started working farms. He personally crafted 2,000 coffins with his own hands, assuring the dying that they would be buried with dignity. Through it all, he preached hope to those who would otherwise be left fearfully alone.

Father Damien was not careful about keeping his distance, and for this, the people loved him. He shared their food, their company, and their friendship. Then one Sunday he began his sermon with these two words, “We lepers... .” Yes, he had contracted the disfiguring disease himself. No longer was he simply serving the lepers; he had become a leper. First, he had chosen to live as they lived. Now he would die as they died.

At this season of the year, we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. How can I understand His choice, not just to help us, but to become one with us? Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Matthew says it all: “They will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God with us’)” (Matthew 1:23, NIV). At the heart of the Christmas story is this truth: We are not abandoned or forgotten.

With that in mind, take another moment with this issue of Communiqué to read about the God in Shoes outreach in Orlando, Fla. This hands-on community service idea was birthed in the heart of our own Jo Dubs, Family and Women’s Ministries director, many years ago. Its practical expression of what it means to be a Christ-follower is life-changing, both for those who serve and those who are served. Shouldn’t everyone know? We are not abandoned or forgotten.

Ed Wright is president of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference

WE REMEMBER... On Dec. 2, 2004, a twin-engine plane crashed on take-off from the Colledgade airport, claiming the lives of four Georgia-Cumberland Conference officials along with the pilot. Lost that day were Dave Cress, president; Jim Frost, vice president for administration; Jamie Arnall, director of communication; Clay Farwell, assistant to the president; and the pilot, John Laswell.

Ten years later, we honor the memory of these men and celebrate their continuing legacy. The passing of time has not diminished this tragedy, but we stand today knowing more of God’s sustaining grace. In the face of doubt and despair, we still choose faith and hope. And we look with renewed longing toward Home.
It was a near-perfect morning for torching my brush pile of fallen branches, dead trees, and outdoor debris. My tractor was well-stocked with rakes, diesel fuel, fire kindling, and my chain saw. As the fire roared to life, gaining momentum, I paused to lay my glasses in a safe place (on the seat of the tractor) before starting a second fire.

As it turned out, it had not been such a safe place. In the flurry of activity, my new glasses were lost. These were not just ordinary glasses. They were pricey with all of the bells and whistles: titanium frames, Transitions lenses, etc. I envisioned them crushed under a tractor tire or scorched in the burn pile.

I looked everywhere for my lost glasses, walking back and forth between burning brush piles, looking around the tractor and through the leaves, sticks, and grass. A while later, my wife joined me in the search. She suggested that we pray. We paused to do so and then redoubled our efforts, retracing our steps, looking everywhere near and around the remains and fragments of the smoldering fire. After tromping through the woods and pasture and examining the burn site, I gave up all hope of ever seeing my glasses again. Surely, God knows where my glasses are! Maybe my glasses are not as important to Him as they are to me?

Three days later while walking through the pasture on a chilly morning, my eyes detected a ray of the early-morning sun glistening off the frosty lens of my glasses, which were nestled in the tall grass. That which had been lost was now found.

“But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer” (Psalm 66:19, NKJV).

Mitch Hazekamp is director of the Stewardship/Trust Services Department

The figures below provide an overview of conference finances as of October 31, 2014. 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>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014 (43 weeks)</th>
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Tim Leffew is director of the conference’s Publishing/PARL (Public Affairs and Religious Liberty) Department. The publishing ministry is a multifaceted program, and Tim stays very active overseeing its many parts. These include the fundraising programs for elementary school children, the Magabook summer programs, and school literature industries at Southern Adventist University and Heritage Academy. There is also the vibrant full-time literature evangelist (LE) ministry and Light America, a Spanish language ministry that is continuing to grow. In addition, Tim directs the Home Health Education Service, a joint effort that assists the LE work in the Kentucky/Tennessee, Gulf States, and Carolina conferences. Their latest program, Family Home Christian Books, is a web-based service for LEs. This program was recently featured on 3ABN. Additionally, Tim oversees religious liberty, which involves helping people who are having religious accommodation issues.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**
I enjoy the outreach aspect. Publishing is a ministry about reaching people where they are in life. Most people don’t know we even exist, much less know about our wonderful message. They will not hear it unless someone goes to them.

**What is your vision for your ministry?**
My vision for the Publishing Department is to provide avenues where every member can feel comfortable using literature to reach people. This includes those who feel God has called them to this as a full-time ministry and those who just want to pass out tracts occasionally.

**How long have you worked at the conference?**
I have worked here for eight years. My total time in publishing ministry is now almost 33 years. As a theology student at Southern, I helped pay my way through college by canvassing during the summers. Then I entered the full-time literature ministry serving as a literature evangelist, field trainer, and publishing director. This service has taken me to the Gulf States, Carolina, Kentucky/Tennessee, and Georgia-Cumberland conferences.

**Tell us about your family and hobbies.**
I met my wife, Jane, at Newbold College in England, and we have been married for 32 years. We have three children: Nathan, Elizabeth, and Jonathan. Nathan and Elizabeth are currently students at Southern Adventist University. Jonathan is home schooled and is 12 years old. I enjoy a variety of hobbies including woodworking, gardening, bird watching, reading, and whatever my 12-year-old son happens to be involved with—which at the moment happens to be remote-control airplanes. I also have a passion for collecting old Seventh-day Adventist books.
Prayer Conference 2015

COMING FEBRUARY 20-22, 2015
Cohutta Springs Conference Center

FEATURING
guest speaker Ron Clouzet, D.Min.
and musician Jim Moon

Information/Registration at www.gccsda.com/events/elevate
Georgia-Cumberland Academy (GCA) recently hosted 45 young people from across the Georgia-Cumberland Conference for its first-ever worship conference. Magnify, as the event was called, took place Oct. 2-4 and was planned as a training opportunity for young people who are interested in leading worship in their home churches and schools. Participants came from a range of educational venues including home school, public school, and Adventist schools.

“I don’t know of anything else like this in the Adventist church, and I feel it is so important to encourage and develop these skills in our young people.”

Organizers of the event, Mark Torsney, instrumental music teacher at GCA, and Jim Lewellen, enrollment director, envisioned this festival as a way to encourage young people to be active in their churches and to teach them the skills they need to effectively lead worship.

During the event, students learned how to plan worship services and select appropriate music; they attended breakout sessions to improve their vocal or instrumental skills; and each participant was assigned to a praise team that led worship music at a church service during the weekend. GCA students were heavily involved in teaching, mentoring, and playing/singing with the festival guests. GCA staff and guest teachers presented the large group sessions and instrumental/vocal workshops.

Responses from participants and sponsors were very encouraging. Britten Bryant, a 15-year-old student at Ooltewah (Tenn.) High School, reflected the enthusiasm of many participants regarding the festival.

“I thought the Magnify festival was amazing!” Bryant said. “Not only did it teach us how to use our skills better, it opened my eyes and taught me that worship is more than just getting up there and singing about God… Magnify was by far one of the best music festivals I’ve done. I loved it, and I will definitely be going back next year.”
Kim Kingry brought a group of nine young people from the Collegedale Community Church (Ooltewah, Tenn.) to the Magnify event.

“I don’t know of anything else like this in the Adventist church, and I feel it is so important to encourage and develop these skills in our young people,” Kingry said. “It is so important that they get excited about leading worship to our God and that they understand how to do that in an effective way. My kids all had a wonderful time, enjoyed the atmosphere, the meetings, the rehearsals, the performances, and the other kids they got to meet and work with.”

Event planners were thrilled that the event was so positively received and hope it has a lasting impact in the lives of the participants.

“It was exciting to see kids coming from all over the conference to participate in a festival that focused on serving the Lord in a worship setting,” Torsney said.

Lewellen was also very happy about the outcome of the festival.

“It was incredibly inspirational to watch these kids sincerely worshiping God,” he said, “and it is my prayer they [will] take their gifts and new-found tools back to their home churches and schools to impact the lives of others.”

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**HIGH SCHOOL RETREAT**

**FEBRUARY 6-8, 2015**

COHUTTA SPRINGS YOUTH CAMP

High School Retreat is a Bible conference event for Adventist students (grades 9-12) who are not attending Adventist schools. It provides an opportunity to step out of the day-to-day routine and listen to God’s voice, relax, and be refreshed.

For more information and/or to register, go to www.gccsda.com/events/HSretreat15
Nearly 100 people attended the Reversing Diabetes Seminar training session held at the Georgia-Cumberland Conference office on Sabbath, Nov. 1. The session was taught by Steve (MPA, RN) and Karen (RN) Wickham, who developed the program and have been using it successfully in Grundy County, Tenn., for the past two years.

The day was packed with lectures, an exercise-learning session, and good fellowship. Lunch was catered using some recipes from the diabetes seminar, such as Raise-the-Roof Sweet Potato-Vegetable Lasagna and Southwestern Salad. Both dishes were very well received.

...this is the Lord’s work and He will bless the efforts of this team of co-laborers.

The Wickhams have just completed a DVD production of the seminar that can be used as a tool for both seminar participants and community educators. This DVD includes eight recorded sessions, along with all of the PowerPoint presentations with notes, plus printable files that include all of the seminar handouts. This will allow anyone who wants to conduct one of these seminars to simply play the recording for each session or to do a live presentation using the PowerPoint slides and notes.

Steve and Karen have been praying for workers in their local area who can help them present these seminars. When they agreed to come to the conference office, they never dreamed that the Lord had already worked out a plan. They discovered a bigger army of workers than they had imagined, who would take this seminar to all reaches of the conference—and beyond. They are confident this is the Lord’s work and that He will bless the efforts of this team of co-laborers as they go out to help relieve the oppression of the folks in their communities who are at risk for or suffer from diabetes. ■
SAVANNAH SCHOOL SHARES JESUS WITH ITS COMMUNITY
by Esther Martinez

Parents, teachers, and other adults surround children for a prayer of blessing at the annual Blessing the Children Prayer Breakfast, held by Savannah Adventist Christian School.

Savannah Adventist Christian School (SACS), located in the growing community of Pooler, Ga., started another year on a strong note with 85 students in their preschool-to-eighth-grade program. And since the first day, several community families have toured the school and are considering enrolling their children.

This year is the first year the school has used RenWeb to track inquiries and ask parents how they learned about the school. They received 36 inquiries for a total of 46 potential students over a six-month period, and answers were almost evenly split among “Internet,” “school sign (drove by the school),” and “word of mouth.” Almost 20 percent of those inquiries resulted in new enrollments for the school. Additionally, the school receives requests for information from other private school search engines, from church members, and from people simply stopping by and knocking on the front door. Also interesting is that 40 percent of the student body is new to the school this year, and 60 percent are from the community, with no known prior connection to the Adventist church. Ten families do not claim to be Christian. Clearly, the school is reaching families for Jesus!

Adventist parent Leticia Chaparro shared that one day in her university classroom, the psychology professor “went on and on about a wonderful little school they had found for their daughter. The more she talked, the more I thought it sounded like our school.” In the end, Chaparro found out that SACS was, indeed, the school this well-respected psychologist was praising!

Several years ago, a grandmother attended some meetings at the church and enrolled her younger granddaughter in preschool at SACS while the mother was deployed overseas with a military assignment. In 2012, she was also able to enroll an older granddaughter, Viviana, in sixth grade. Although the grandmother regularly attends church services, she has not yet taken her public stand for Jesus through baptism; however, Viviana made that decision at the end of last school year and celebrated her new birth in Christ—with the blessing of both mother and grandmother—on May 10, 2014.

continued on page 27 [see SAVANNAH SCHOOL]
Communication director, Tamara Wolcott Fisher, recently sat down with the Women’s Ministries team—Jo Dubs, director, and Donna Crandall, administrative assistant—to learn more about the God in Shoes outreach that took place in conjunction with the North American Division Women’s Convention, held in September in Orlando, Fla.

The God in Shoes outreach took place on Sept. 26, one day before the official start of the convention. In order to participate in the outreach event, many ladies had to take time off work and reserve a hotel room for an extra night. Yet approximately 800 women signed up to volunteer at one of the 14 sites, which included homeless shelters, day spas, hospitals, and homes of individuals who needed help with cleaning and yard work.

What does it take to make an event of this size happen?

Jo: We have a really amazing Women’s Ministry team. There are 14 ladies on the team, and 12 attended the event in Orlando. The level of commitment with this team is like none other.

Donna: Our team is like family. We are all like sisters. One of the biggest tasks was putting together all nine of the kits for the spa days. These kits included supply bins for all of the spa-day stations.

Jo: I went to Orlando two times, three days each time, to prepare for this event. I jumped through hoops, signed papers—whatever needed doing. Donna and I work well together because I do the pre-work, public work, and negotiating, and she is really good at mapping out these events. I love that we work in our gifted areas.

Donna: Other conferences helped, too. While we supplied all of the spa kits, our partner conferences provided the supplies for the gift bags we handed out to the visiting women.
Jo: Lunch for the 800 God in Shoes volunteers was organized by Sheryl Vandenberg, Florida Conference Women’s Ministry director, and a team of prayer warriors was praying the entire time while God in Shoes was taking place. Shirley Scott, South Central Conference Women’s Ministry director, coordinated that.

In addition, we sent the North American Division (NAD) a wish list full of items that some of the agencies said they would like, and the response was overwhelming. We received bedding, clothing, toiletries, personal care items, and so much more! The agencies were so grateful.

We have it down to a science, so to speak, but each factor is based on a huge element of faith. For instance, we had one location pull out two weeks before the event, but the Lord blessed, and they were able to find us a new place where we could serve.

Was this the largest event you’ve done?
Jo: Yes, this NAD event is the largest God in Shoes outreach we’ve coordinated in terms of the number of volunteers and venues. It was our second time working in conjunction with the NAD Women’s Convention; the previous event was held in Dallas, Texas, where 700 volunteers served at 12 venues. We’ve also coordinated large events for the Southern Union in Atlanta, Ga., and Charleston, S.C.

What happens after God in Shoes leaves?
Donna: We try to work with local Adventist churches so they can have leads to follow up on. Since we have the ladies sign in, it provides the churches with contact information so they can personally invite these ladies and their families to future events. One of the churches who hosted a site for us in September is already planning its own God in Shoes follow-up event. It’s a ministry that opens the door for further ministry.
How does God in Shoes bless you?

**Donna:** It is exciting to work with the team we have and to see them grow. It’s a lot of hard work, but knowing that you have touched a heart and a life for Jesus makes it well worth the effort.

I went with a team to offer a spa day at a safe house. They could not believe we would volunteer our time and energy without any compensation. They kept saying, over and over, that they had never had anyone do anything nice for them. This is a frequent response at our God in Shoes events. People are surprised and touched that we offer something for nothing.

**Jo:** This is the heart of ministry, and I can’t imagine not being involved at this level. I really believe this is what God has called us to do. So how can we not do it? As director of the ministry, it gives me the greatest feeling of appreciation when, after so much planning, I look around and see God working through each and every volunteer doing so much more than I could by myself. This is the God in Shoes experience. The volunteers and guests are in God’s holy presence, and the whole thing, from start to finish, is living proof that God continues to bless.

Approximately 800 women organize into groups based on where they signed up to serve for the God in Shoes event day.

Volunteers help sort and organize donated items at the Coalition for the Homeless women’s shelter.

Photos by Julio Muñoz
Women throughout the North American Division hand-made and donated more than 500 hats to the Florida Hospital Cancer Institute for their breast cancer patients.

Dan Jackson (right), NAD president, poses with a volunteer who is helping with yard work.

Hand and nail care are just some of the services provided at spa days.

A volunteer helps a local resident with cleaning and yard work.

Jo Dubs (right), Women’s Ministries director, takes a moment to snap a picture with new friends.
Every year, a small but growing and dedicated group of men gather at Cohutta Springs in mid-October for the Men’s Retreat. This year, the group consisted of about 50 men, many of whom are repeat attendees. They keep returning because they find great resources and spiritual renewal.

This year’s retreat included breakout workshops on how to be a better man of God, going through the team-building ropes course, and a time of testimony.

“It’s spiritually uplifting, and I like the theme,” said Phillip Pfeiffer from the Battlefield Church in Ft. Oglethorpe, Ga. “I think the workshops are really beneficial, and I appreciate that.”

Lucas Patterson, men’s ministries leader of the Ooltewah (Tenn.) Church, encourages his church’s men to attend. He finds it a great place to nurture ministry growth.

“Today we spent time talking with other men’s ministry leaders in the Chattanooga area [and asked]: ‘How can we build off this annual event? What can we do to ensure that this is not the only event guys are invited to?’ A lot of the churches offer [occasional] programs, and we’re trying to consolidate that a little bit so that if I’m too busy to program something at Ooltewah, I can still invite my men to something in the Chattanooga area every month. That would take some of the burden off of me; we would share that responsibility of growing together as men.”

Claudio Consuegra, North American Division men’s ministries director, was the main speaker for the weekend event.

“I hope [the men] realize the great responsibility—but more than that, the great joy—that God gives us by being [men],” Consuegra said. “He has a plan for us to be the husbands He intended us to be, to be the fathers He intended us to be, and for the work He has for us. That is not just secular work, but it’s a ministry of sorts. ...This is an opportunity to refocus and redirect our lives so we can be the men God intended us to be.”
Growing up on an organic farm in southern Oregon, Cody Clifford witnessed the agricultural process from seed to harvest. Now he’s using what he learned in the farming world to cultivate the minds of students in Columbus, Ga.

Clifford is the new principal/teacher at the Columbus First Adventist School, which sits on a 12-acre church campus with plenty of green space suitable for gardening and other outdoor activities. It’s there that he plans to develop a robust, Christ-centered academic program that encourages students to grow spiritually and explore the world around them.

School started Aug. 18, and Clifford has already doubled enrollment to 13 students. He plans to increase the number even more by providing a stimulating educational environment and outreach projects in the community. He currently has one teaching assistant but hopes to expand to a multiple-teacher school in the future.

“I think public schools can offer strong academics,” said Clifford, while reflecting on what his school has to offer. “But at Columbus First Adventist School, we can provide individualized academic education coupled with building character and teaching students how to share their faith.”

Clifford came to Columbus by way of Corrales, N.M., where he taught math, physical education, and history at SandiaView Elementary School. While there, he also served as a teacher’s aid, tutor, and guitar instructor. Prior to that, he spent nearly three years teaching fifth- and sixth-graders at Rogers Adventist School in College Place, Wash. He also has mission experience, having taught English Language Learner classes, athletics, and music at Taipei Adventist American School in Taiwan.

continued on page 27 [see COLUMBUS SCHOOL]
The Decatur (Tenn.) Church recently received the Meigs County-Decatur Chamber of Commerce “Church of the Year” award. The award was presented on Thursday evening, Nov. 13, at the Meigs County-Decatur Chamber of Commerce banquet.

John Gann, Chamber president, presented the award. In his presentation, Gann said:

“For over 40 years, this church has been serving the spiritual, social, and physical needs of Decatur and Meigs County communities. While many of the church activities are what you would expect of a church, there are several things that happened this year that are particularly worthy of acknowledgment.

As a way to benefit the community this year, the church chose events that would strengthen families and personal well-being. In June, the church celebrated the end of school and beginning of summer with a free-to-the-community “Penny Fair”—a fun day outside, filled with games, food, and neighborly togetherness.

In September, the church sponsored a Health and Happiness booth at the county fair. This was followed by a health expo at the church [in November]. The expo brought together the resources of Star Regional Hospital, Meigs Ministries, the Meigs County Health Department, Wildwood Lifestyle Center, and the Decatur Seventh-day Adventist Church members to provide individual health assessments, flu shots, and public services counseling. All of this was free to the public.

The church regularly assists Meigs South [Elementary School] with its after-school programs. Throughout this year, dozens of church members worked on several community projects, such as trash and rubbish removal, house repair, and winterization projects for neighbors in need.

Finally, the church regularly provides meeting space for important community events, including the annual Chamber Fashion Show, EMS training sessions, and, of course, the banquet we are enjoying this evening.

It is for all these contributions to the community that the Chamber has chosen the Decatur Seventh-day Adventist Church as the 2014 Church of the Year.”

Don Shelton, Decatur Church pastor, received the award on behalf of the church.

“I have the privilege of pastoring a group of multi-talented people who love their community,” Shelton said. “I think one of the things churches should be doing is serving one another. We appreciate the recognition.”
Children’s Ministries Convention 2015

with Ken Rogers,
Southern Union Children’s Ministries Director

FEBRUARY 13-15
Cohutta Springs Conference Center

Learn more at gccsda.com/events/cmc15 — Register online at registration.gccsda.com
The question kept coming back: How can Impact Mission Group in Collegedale, Tenn., support families who have children with special needs? As a church, we’d made the decision that we would be a place where everyone would be welcomed. But the question kept returning: How do you include everyone—parents and children—so no one would feel alone? As pastor, I wasn’t the only person with this question on my mind. Carolina Montes struggled with it, as well.

“As the mom of a child with autism, coming to church was extremely hard,” Montes said. “I felt alone. No one else had a child with autism.”

Some days the Montes’ child would come to church smiling; other days, he would cry, screaming all the way. Everyone wanted to help, but nobody knew how.

I told Alberto Montes, the father, to keep coming to church, that this was their home and family. I also said to let us know if we could help in any way. So the Montes family kept coming to church each Sabbath, claiming the promise in Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (KJV).

One day, Alberto Montes shared at a church board meeting that an Autism Awareness Walk would soon be held in Chattanooga. He asked if there was any way the church could support the walk or maybe sponsor a few members to go. He also said the walk was scheduled for a Saturday.

We’d supported the walk the previous year and had, in fact, been the biggest group there. We had also been honored to raise the second-highest amount of money to help fund children who need therapy.

Before I could say anything in response to Alberto Montes’ request, a board member said, “Why don’t we just close everything and all go?” So that’s exactly what we did.

On Nov. 8, our church was represented by 56 members who participated in the walk. Together, we raised more than $1,600 for the cause and were able to share about our ministry and mission to help churches include families with autism, along with telling them about other outreach ministries from our church. But most importantly, we made connections with others in our community and allowed them to see that Christ cares for them!
YOUTH MINISTRIES CONVENTION FOCUSES ON COMMUNITY
by Tamara Wolcott Fisher, communication director

Today more people are connected via the Internet than in person, and we are feeling the effects as a church. All of the data on why youth and young adults are leaving points to one word: community.

The Youth Ministries Convention held at Cohutta Springs Youth Camp met Sept. 26-27, and the topic of community was on the agenda with the theme “Engage: Plugging Youth Into the Life of the Church.”

“God has been busy building a vision for Youth and Young Adult Ministries in this conference and, in fact, this whole division,” said Don Keele, Jr., Young Adult Ministries associate director. “This weekend is a great way for us to come and get in sync with one another so [that] hopefully we can engage a new generation in the life of the church body.”

Convention presenter was Steve Case, president of Involve Youth in Sacramento, Calif. He’s also director of Ultimate Workout, a mission project designed for teenagers through Maranatha Volunteers International. Case has more than 30 years of experience working as youth pastor, seminary professor, and consultant.

Eric Hickman, a 20-year-old from Crossville, Tenn., attended the convention with his father, Brian. They work in youth ministry together at their church and even have an online radio station (teenstargeted.org).

“A lot of the research they are presenting I have gone over myself,” Eric Hickman said. “They are on the right track. We need more personal relationships with youth, inside and outside the church.”

Gabriel Johnson, associate pastor at the Augusta (Ga.) First Church, is excited about youth ministry and wanted to garner new ideas for his church. He attended the pastors’ track.

“We really talked about one main thing: how to lead a church in change, embracing the youth and mentoring [them],” Johnson said. “I am excited to be here and [have enjoyed] the people I am meeting.”

Approximately 100 people attended.

“I’m excited to see so many [here],” Keele said. “Engage! leadership training is one of the best ways to bring your youth ministry into focus. Next year, we hope more will join us for this training event.”

To stay in touch with Youth/Young Adult Ministries, visit www.gccsda.com/young-adult and sign up for the Engage! and Engage! Leadership newsletters.
In his book “The Science of Happily Ever After,” psychologist Ty Tashiro shares that only three in 10 people who get married stay in a healthy, happy relationship. It’s a sad reality today that so many “I dos” turn into “I don’ts.” In an effort to fight back against such striking statistics, Family Ministries offers an annual marriage retreat designed to strengthen and enrich couples and provide them with relationship tools to not only stay together, but to do so happily.

Around 116 couples attended this year’s retreat, which was held Oct. 31-Nov. 2 at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Ga. Guest presenters were Jorge and Evelyn Torres. Jorge serves as a military chaplain based out of Fort Bragg, N.C. Evelyn is a certified instructor in several relationship seminars, including Active Family and Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage. Together, the couple has been instrumental in supporting soldiers and their families, as well as families within the Adventist church.

“The main goal we have is for them to have oneness,” said Jorge Torres, “the intimacy of oneness in the relationship where man and wife become one in Christ.”

In addition to the Torres’ presentations, the weekend also included music by guest musician Chad Mutchler, a Saturday-night banquet, and time for couples to explore the gardens and enjoy each other’s company.

“We do a lot of mission trips, so we needed this time alone for ourselves,” said David Lassiter, from the Bowman Hills (Tenn.) Church. “It’s been a blessing.”

Couples who attended the retreat ranged from having been married 50 years to only 3 and a half months. Newlyweds James and Alyssa Johnston, from Hixson, Tenn., received the weekend as a wedding gift.

“We’ve been told that a lot of couples wanted to [come to the retreat when they first got married] but six or 10 years later, they’re finally doing it,” said Alyssa Johnston. “Everyone’s like, ‘It’s good you’re doing it in the beginning.’”

Jo Dubs, director of Family Ministries, said the department continues hosting the retreat because of the value it provides to couples and the church as a whole.

“It’s important for us to put an emphasis on our families,” Dubs said. “It’s very rewarding to see couples return year after year because they are willing to build their relationship and make their marriage all God intended it to be.”
BUENOS DÍAS mi amor

Retiro de parejas:
$350/pareja ($300 “Early Bird” si se registra antes del 21 de Enero 2015)

Los espacios son limitados:
Para registrarse visite la página web: www.registration.gccsda.com
fecha límite 13 de Febrero del 2015

Profesores:
Dr. Nelson Ivan González Garcia & Dra. Argénida Blanco Gómez

Fecha:
20-22 de Febrero 2015

Lugar:
Winshape Retreat Center
2277 Martha Berry Hwy, Mt Berry, GA 30149

Para más información llamar a la Oficina de Ministerio Hispano de la Georgia Cumberland Conference al teléfonos:
706-629-7951 xt. 391 ó (800) 567-1844 Ext. 391
COBLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCES TRAGEDY AT REUNION EVENT
by Tamara Wolcott Fisher, communication director

What was meant to be a joyful celebration at the 50-year reunion for John L. Coble Elementary School in Calhoun, Ga., turned into a tragedy with three injuries and one death on Nov. 8, 2014.

According to the Gordon County Sheriff’s Department statement: “Investigating deputies and detectives determined that a middle-aged male driver of a pickup truck apparently suffered some type of acute medical emergency before losing consciousness and control of his vehicle in a parking lot. According to witnesses and evidence at the scene, the out-of-control vehicle struck other automobiles and three pedestrians before coming to rest. Two of the pedestrians were children. The driver of the pickup truck was subsequently pronounced dead.”

The individuals struck by the vehicle were John Griswold and his two sons, Noah (9) and Atreyu (6). All three have since been released from the hospital and are recovering.

Crawford Compton, age 58, a local chiropractor in Calhoun, Ga., and member of the Calhoun Church, was the individual driving the pickup truck. He died that day of sudden cardiac complications.

Blessedly, the Calhoun community has rallied around the Compton and Griswold families, according to Ric Stitzer, principal at Coble. The local Calhoun and Georgia-Cumberland churches have established a family donation fund for the Griswolds, plus a loaner car, and they have received funds to pay the tuition for both boys, who are students at Coble. Individuals have also volunteered to take over John’s responsibilities as part-time janitor at Coble and have all of the wages continue to go to the Griswold family.

“When I visited John this Sabbath in the hospital, he told me his extended family are not members of the Adventist Church,” Stitzer said. “They are really impressed that our community has picked up and helped the family in such a great way.”

Lauren Griswold, wife and mother, was in Illinois at the time of the accident and said church friends stepped in and took care of everyone like family until she arrived later that same day.

“There is no family like God’s family,” she said.

“Our hearts go out to both families so deeply affected by this tragedy,” said Ed Wright, conference president.
MAKEOVER 2014: FAITHBOOK
by Waleska Gonzalez, Latin-American Ministries administrative assistant

NEWS

About 150 youth attended this year’s Makeover retreat, held Nov. 7-9.

Under the theme “Faithbook,” as a reference to the social media site Facebook, approximately 150 young people attended Makeover at Cohutta Springs on Nov. 7-9.

Makeover is an annual retreat weekend where Hispanic young people from throughout the conference come together to praise Jesus. It also provides an opportunity for them to invite their non-Adventist friends to meet Jesus.

This year’s main speaker was Edgar Alquinta, who delivered a very special message to the group. The weekend was full of music, messages, prayers, games, and lots of fellowship—all of it organized and led by the Hispanic Youth Federations: UJAM (Atlanta Metro), FEJA NORTE (North Georgia), and FEJA KNOX (Tennessee).

Now in its fourth year, Makeover is a much-anticipated event.

“We’ve come every year because it is super fun, we share with our friends, and we meet new ones,” said Eric Lomas.

On Sabbath morning, seminars covered topics including social media, the integration of generations, how to get more from the Bible, and final events. Special guest Michael Carducci from Coming Out Ministries also talked to the group about purity. Sabbath afternoon, the final match of Bible Bowl was held. It was a close battle between UJAM and FEJA KNOX, but Isaías Benítez from UJAM was ultimately victorious. Later that night, the youth had a blast playing games and reconnecting with old friends plus making new ones.

“I was invited by my friends, and I loved the music, the activities, and meeting new people,” said Zaira Hernández, a first-time attendee. “It was fun, and I’ll come back next year.”
A weekend retreat for cancer survivors and their families

Only $50 per family of four. Registration begins February 15 (through March 15). Limited to the first 125 participants.

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For more information, call 800-940-6789 or 706-695-9093 or email sleland@cohuttasprings.com
COLUMBUS SCHOOL continued from page 17

Clifford was selected for the Columbus position after an extensive search by a school-based search committee. Keith Trumbo, Columbus First Church pastor, said he was hired because of his strong credentials and focus on Christ-centered education.

“Our vision is ‘Think Faith, Live Faith, Share Faith,’” Trumbo said. “Mr. Clifford’s commitment to having Jesus in the classroom will continue our commitment to help children understand the process of learning how to agree with Jesus, how to think faith.”

Clifford said he has always loved working with children but tried to avoid his calling. After high school, he went to Walla Walla University with hopes of becoming a dentist. He later changed his major to business administration so he could one day run his own dental practice.

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SAVANNAH SCHOOL continued from page 11

Another mother and father sat in the principal’s office with tears in their eyes as they recounted how their daughter, Sophia, chose SACS as her school before she could even read. The family often drove by the school on their way to buy groceries, and Sophia would sit up in her car seat, pointing out the window, declaring, “That’s my school.” Of course, as soon as she was old enough to start preschool, they enrolled her. She is now a second-grader. The parents are leaders at a small non-denominational church in town and often receive criticism for supporting the Adventist church by sending their daughter to its school, but the mother said she wants both of her children to attend SACS “all the way to twelfth grade, if you decide to add it” and doesn’t care if they become Seventh-day Adventists. She just wants them to follow Jesus all the way to heaven!

The local church and school boards and teaching staff are very intentional about inviting the community to experience the strong spiritual tone that is present in our classrooms. One example is the annual Blessing the Children Prayer Breakfast sponsored by the church’s Social Ministries committee and the school’s Home & School Association. On Aug. 24, about 120 children and their families gathered in the Savannah First Church sanctuary for a simple, Christ-centered program. The service culminated with all of the children getting up front, while parents, grandparents, and other adults gathered around them for a special prayer of blessing. Afterward, everyone enjoyed a delicious breakfast together.

But God had other plans, Clifford said. Friends and relatives kept saying he was meant to be a teacher, and he felt in his heart that it was what God wanted him to do. So after graduating from Walla Walla in 2010 with his bachelor’s degree in business administration, he went on to earn a master’s in elementary education in 2013.

Since moving to Columbus, Clifford has focused on giving the students a fresh start. He’s updating technology and creating a more professional environment so they will take pride in the school. He also plans to have students share their experience with the community through a newsletter, music, and other activities.

Most recently, Clifford and his wife, Rachel, welcomed a beautiful baby girl. Like the farm where he grew up, his life continues to bear good fruit. Columbus is blessed to have him and his family planted in the community.
Earlier this year, the Georgia-Cumberland Conference established four renewable $4,000 scholarships for Southern Adventist University students who are junior or senior elementary education majors with a GPA of 3.0 or higher. To qualify for the “Passing the Torch” scholarship, recipients must be a member of a conference church and should have demonstrated a “calling” for the ministry of Seventh-day Adventist education. They are selected by the School of Education, then approved by the conference’s Office of Education and administrative committee.

“This is perfect—a win-win program.”

This scholarship allows the top education candidates from Georgia-Cumberland to be identified and assisted financially with the intention of keeping “home-grown talent” within the conference workforce. The program also increases collaboration between Southern’s School of Education and Psychology and Georgia-Cumberland’s Office of Education.

“This is perfect—a win-win program,” said Kevin Kossick, vice president for education. “It galvanizes our K-16 purpose while benefiting Southern and its students, the conference and its constituents, and eventually children who attend Seventh-day Adventist schools.”

On Sept. 11, 2014, in a ceremony on Southern’s campus, Kossick presented the first four recipients with their scholarships. They are Ashleigh Scuilli, Sarah Theus, Christianna Walter, and Briana Wever.

Additional details can be obtained by contacting Krystal Bishop at Southern Adventist University or Kevin Kossick at the Georgia-Cumberland Conference.
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Power Your Life...

South Georgia Convocation
March 28, 2015
Macon, GA

Korean Camp Meeting
May 15-17, 2015
Cohutta Springs Conference Center

Collegedale Camp Meeting
May 27-30, 2015
Southern Adventist University

Olde Time Camp Meeting
June 11-13, 2015
Deer Lodge, TN

Deaf Fellowship Camp Meeting
July 29-August 2, 2015
Cohutta Springs Conference Center

Northeast Tennessee Camp Meeting
September 25-26, 2015
The Oaks Retreat, Greeneville, TN

Hispanic Camp Meeting
October 30-November 1, 2015
Cohutta Springs Conference Center

South Georgia Convocation
November 14, 2015
Albany, GA

More information:
gccsda.com/campmeeting
CONFERECE EVENTS

DECEMBER
6 Health Rally
Waycross Church, GA
22-Jan 4 Year-End Holidays (office closed)

JANUARY
3 World Church Day of Prayer
4 Adventurer Directors’ Council
10 Health and Personal Ministries Leadership Training
11 Pathfinder Directors’ Council
11-14 Ministers’ Winter Meetings
16-18 Pathfinder Junior Event
17 Health and Personal Ministries Leadership Training
17 Prayer Ministries Day
19 MLK Jr. Day (office closed)
23-25 Adventurer Directors’ Council Planning Retreat
25 Hispanic Women’s Leadership Training
30-Feb 1 Hispanic Children’s Ministries Convention
31 Pathfinder Bible Experience (Regional Level)
31 Health and Personal Ministries Leadership Training

FEBRUARY
5-7 Disaster Response Training
6-8 Adventist Recovery Ministries Leadership Training
6-8 High School Retreat
13-15 Children’s Ministries Convention
14 Pathfinder Bible Experience (Conference Level)
16 Presidents’ Day (office closed)
20-22 Hispanic Couples’ Retreat
20-22 Pathfinder Teen Event
20-22 Prayer Conference
27-March 1 CONNECT: ACF Leadership Conference

OFFERING SCHEDULE

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Spreading the Gospel Through Internet Radio

Free Communication Training Event

Sunday, January 25, 2015  •  1 to 3 p.m.
Conference Office  •  Calhoun, Georgia

Learn from Brian and Eric Hickman, a father and son team, about how they started their own Internet radio station in Crossville, Tennessee, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with teens.

This informative training session will give you a glimpse of what it’s like to share Jesus through this creative avenue.

For more information and/or to register: gccsda.com/events/commtraining15

For questions: 706-629-7951, ext. 394