Allegheny East Member Raises $8,500 for Cancer Research

Last February Louvenia Anderson, a local health guru and member of Miracle Temple in Baltimore, received devastating news. She was diagnosed with Myelodysplastic Syndrome and Acute Myeloid Leukemia. No research has been done on the disease and there is no cure at this time. When Anderson found out about the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society’s Light the Night fundraiser, she was impressed to raise $10,000 toward research for this cancer.

With help from her large network of friends and supporters, Anderson raised nearly $8,500. Those friends came from the Totally You weight management program and Serenity Sisters group, both of which she founded; friends from her work as the Baltimore Area Health Network coordinator for Allegheny East Conference; and her church family at Miracle Temple.

Looking back at the experience, Anderson says she realized “how truly blessed I am.”—Story and photo by Taashi Rowe
Potomac, ASI Member Shines for Christ

Daniel Reed (pictured with his wife, Lezlie, and their children), a member of the Columbia Union chapter of Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI), owns the Ashburn, Va.-based Nova HomeWorks. Through his work, he finds many opportunities to shine for Christ.

One of Reed’s most memorable witnessing opportunities happened last year when his company received a call about an 11-year-old girl diagnosed with cancer. Neighbors wanted to help the parents improve their home so their daughter would be comfortable.

“By God’s grace we were able to donate [carpet] padding and all the labor for the install, but noticed that they needed more help,” said Reed, who is also a member of Potomac Conference’s Vienna (Va.) church. “I came back to the office, prayed and then emailed some of my business friends. By the next day, we had raised over $1,200 to pay for painting and a new dishwasher.”

Reed is just one of many ASI members who will share how they bring Christ into their workplace at the union’s March 8-11 ASI convention. Click here for more information.

Washington Adventist University Dedicates Music Center

January 11 Washington Adventist University held its first opening convocation of 2012 in Sligo church. The convocation also served as an opportunity to bless the newly completed Leroy and Lois Peters Music Education Center. The building’s namesakes (pictured) made a $1
million contribution toward the completion of the building and were on hand for a ribbon cutting immediately following the service.

With the completion of the center, the Department of Music will enjoy amenities that were not afforded in their previous home. The center includes percussion, voice and instrument studios, all with acoustic insulation. The largest section of the building is the band/orchestra rehearsal hall, which takes up parts of the first and second floors. The grand opening of the building will take place during Alumni Weekend, April 13-15.—Story and photo by Kevin Manuel

READ MORE

Chesapeake Member Testifies of God’s Healing

After God healed her from stomach cancer, Mayra Guillen knew she had to share her story and God’s mercy with others. In her new booklet, *El Metodo Curativo de Dios*, which means “God’s Natural Healing,” this member of Chesapeake Conference’s Bowie Spanish church in Bowie, Md., shares the natural remedies she learned from the physicians who treated her.

“I want to help others get the information they need to avoid cancer and to have a better quality life,” she said. Order a copy by calling (301) 996-2767.

Miembro de Chesapeake testifica de como Dios cura

Después que Dios la curó de cáncer del estómago, Mayra Guillen sabía que tenía que compartir su historia y la gracia de Dios con otros. En su nuevo libreto, *El Método Curativo de Dios*, la Hna. Guillen de la Iglesia Hispana de Bowie en Bowie, Md. (de la Conferencia de Chesapeake), comparte remedios naturales que ella aprendió de los doctores que trabajaron con ella.

“Quiero ayudar a otros a recibir la información que necesitan para evitar el cáncer and para vivir una vida de mejor calidad,” ella dice. Ordene su copia llamando al (301) 996-2767.
New Jersey Commissions Four Teachers

The New Jersey Conference recently honored four teachers and granted them the Commissioned Ministry of Teaching Credential. Those commissioned were (pictured left to right) Malou Saint-Ulysse, principal of Meadow View Junior Academy in Chesterfield; Ruth Nino, principal of the Waldwick School in Waldwick; Elayna Barnhill Moffit, vice principal of Lake Nelson School in Piscataway; and Elisa Garcia-Maragoto (with daughter Sabrina), principal of the Lake Nelson School.

To become eligible for commissioning, a teacher must complete a minimum of six years teaching ministry and maintain a teaching certification.—Story and photo by Jim Greene

Mountain View Members GLOW at Parade

When Pastor Linden St. Clair (pictured left) and members of Mountain View Conference’s Rainelle (W.Va.) church attended their town’s Christmas parade, they did more than just watch. They also distributed GLOW (Giving Light to Our World) pamphlets to fellow attendees.

“Before the parade began, we sang a number of Christmas carols outside the [church’s] Rainelle Better Living Center, which is right on Main Street where the parade would be coming,” St. Clair said. “Even though it was way below 30, we had a good time singing and sharing the truth of the Bible.”
End Quote: What Shaped My Ministry

“I had a perception of God’s will that was skewed by my own ambition and agenda. As a college student, I convinced myself that God wanted me to pursue a path that will bring financial security, recognition and respect. For years I valiantly resisted the persistent pull of God to align my will with His.

I was confronted with God’s reality a year out of college as I pitched chicken manure off the back of a flatbed—a task that provided neither financial security, recognition nor respect. I slowly learned, however, that when I surrender my own perception of success, God can grant true victory in life and in ministry.”—D. David Kim, English Pastor at the Washington-Spencerville Korean church in Silver Spring, Md.

Columbia Union Members in the News

Reading Kenhorst Member: **Faces of Faith: Edward Cafoncelli**

WGTS Chaplain Terry Johnsson: **An Accomplished Life**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**January 21: Restoration Praise Center is hosting a Religious Liberty Day under the theme** "Religious Liberty: It’s Political and Global Impact and What it Means to You.”
The featured speaker for the divine hour will be presidential appointee Orlan Johnson, chairman of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation. There will also be a panel discussion with guests Paul Monteiro, associate director, White House Office of Public Engagement; Melissa Reid, associate director, *Liberty magazine*; Jennifer Mason, deputy chief of staff for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management; and Michelle Chin, PhD, legislative assistant to Senator John Cornyn (R-TX). The church is located at 10411 Greenbelt Road in Lanham, Md. For more information, visit rpcsda.org.
January 21: The Capitol Hill Church’s Family Ministries team invites you to attend their “Resolving Conflict” seminar. An expert trained in conflict management will be on hand to moderate the discussion. The seminar will be held at 3 p.m. Register at chcfamilylife@gmail.com.

January 26: The George E. Peters Adventist School Open House will be held from 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. If you have children in pre-K-8th grade, visit them at 6303 Riggs Road in Hyattsville, Md. For more information, visit gepetersschool.org or call (301) 559-6710.

January 21-27: The Metropolitan church invites you to bring a friend to the “Get on Board” evangelism series featuring Abraham Jules, DMin. The Lloyd Mallory Singers will present a mini concert to kick off the series at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday evening, January 21. Other musical guests for the week include Tenore Three, Kay Bishop-Hall, Heaven’s Song and Paul Heflin. The meetings will take place at 7:30 p.m. in Hyattsville, Md., on Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday nights. For more information, visit metrosda.org.

January 29: The Pennsylvania Conference Youth and Young Adult Ministries Family Ski Trip will be held at Jack Frost Big Boulder in White Haven, Pa. The price is $48 for the snow pass, lesson and rental. The lessons are for ages 8 and over. Helmet rentals are $10 additional. Tickets must be purchased by January 16, 2012. Pre-paid ticket pick-up will be at the Jack Frost Lodge, 8 a.m.-12 noon. For more information, contact the conference’s Youth Ministries Department at (607) 374-8331, ext. 212 or at pa-youth@paconference.org.

February 2: Spencerville Adventist Academy invites all eighth graders and other high school students to attend their Academy Day from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Visiting students will get the opportunity to meet teachers and students, hear and see the school’s touring groups perform, compete for scholarships, play against basketball teams and check out the new school. To RSVP, contact Heidi Wetmore at (301) 421-9101 or hwetmore@spencerville.org.

February 12: Crossroads Adventist Preparatory School Presents “A Healthier You: Community Symposium and Health Fair.” It runs 10 a.m. thru 4 p.m. and will feature student presentations on health, nutrition and fitness; a health trivia challenge game; information and activity booths featuring massage therapy, health screenings, medical organizations and vegetarian cooking demos; fitness classes, seminars/workshops on women’s, men’s and children’s health and more! The school is located at 3291 St John's Lane, in Ellicott City, Md. For more information, call (866) 715-7752.
February 17-19: The “Love for a Lifetime” Marriage Enrichment Retreat will be held at the Dunes Manor Hotel in Ocean City, Md. The registration fee of $299 per couple includes two nights at Dunes Manor Hotel, brunch, tea, dinner on Saturday and brunch on Sunday. For more information, e-mail MarriageEnrichment@comcast.net, or contact Mark and Peggy Lee at (301) 317-5428 or Jeff and Sandy Hartz at (443) 864-6328. The Triadelphia church and Maranatha Adventist Fellowship are among the churches sponsoring the retreat.

February 24-26: Chesapeake Conference’s high school students will want to attend the Generation Rain Spiritual Retreat at Mount Aetna Camp and Retreat Center in Hagerstown, Md. Themed “The Call,” the weekend features speakers from Insight magazine: Duane Esmond, editor; Tom Fraga, associate editor; and Tiffany Taylor-Mduba, columnist. For details, call Ann Reynolds at (410) 995-1910, or email areynolds@ccosda.org.

February 24-26, 2012: Pennsylvania Conference’s marriage retreat, “Love on the Farm” will feature Claudio and Pamela Consuegra, North American Division Family Ministries directors. It will be held at the Best Western Premier Contral Hotel and Conference Center in Harrisburg, Pa. To register online visit, www.paconference.org, go to the Ministries page and click on Family Ministries. For more information, contact Jeanne Hartwell at jhartwell@paconference.org, or (610) 374-8331.

February 25: The New England Youth Ensemble will recognize the ministry of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse with a tribute concert. Soprana Karla Bucklew will also perform. The concert will take place at 4 p.m. at the Frederick church at 6437 Jefferson Pike in Frederick, Md. For more information, visit fredericksdachurch.org or call (301) 662-5254.

March 8-11: The Columbia Union chapter of the Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) convention will feature Ivor Myers, speaker/director of Power of the Lamb Ministries; the Guild of Adventist Musicians and Henry Wright, pastor of the Community Praise Center in Alexandria, Va. The convention will be held at Potomac Conference’s Vienna (Va.) church, located at 344 Courthouse Road SW in Vienna. For more information visit www.asicolumbiaunion.netasi.org or register at www.plusline.org.

For more news and up-to-date information from the Columbia Union Conference, visit columbiaunion.org

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Last February, Louvenia Anderson, a local health guru and a member of Miracle Temple in Baltimore, received devastating news. She was diagnosed with Myelodysplastic Syndrome and Acute Myeloid Leukemia. No research has been done on the disease and there is no cure at this time.

One day while at a class for cancer patients, Anderson found out about the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and about their Light the Night fundraiser. She was impressed to raise $10,000 toward research for this cancer.

Anderson, who relied on her large network of friends and supporters through the Totally You weight management program and Serenity Sisters group, both of which she founded; friends from her work as the Baltimore Area Health Network coordinator for Allegheny East Conference and her church family, raised nearly $8,500. On the day of the walk, friends from as far away as Virginia Beach, Va., Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Washington, D.C., came out in bad weather to show their support.

“I prayed up to the day of the walk that God would prepare my body and sustain me to attend the walk, and God answered my prayers,” Anderson said. “I was able to participate in the activities and fellowship before the walk. I waited at the site while others walked for me and they were excited to do so.”

Looking back at the experience, Anderson adds, she realized “how truly blessed I am. It was a very cold, rainy, snowy, icy day and family and friends showed up in droves in spite of the weather condition.”
Potomac, ASI Member Shines for Christ

Story by Visitor Staff
Published 1/18/2012

One might not immediately think that installing carpets, wood floors and tiles can serve as a testimony to Christ, but Daniel Reed, a member of Potomac Conference’s Vienna (Va.) church and a member of the Columbia Union chapter of Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) knows better. As the owner of Nova HomeWorks, an Ashburn, Va.-based flooring company, he founded the business with the plan of reaching others for Christ. And through his work, he has found many opportunities to shine for Christ.

“Many of our customers wonder why we need to finish up early on Friday and why we don’t work on Saturdays,” he says. “These questions allow us to share much about our Sabbath and our faith. While many may not yet be ready to come to church, we get to talking about spiritual things and we have had the opportunity to pray with some of them over difficulties they may be having.”

One of Reed’s most memorable witnessing opportunities came in the past year when his company received a call about an 11-year-old girl diagnosed with cancer. Neighbors wanted to help the parents improve their home so their daughter would be comfortable when she returned from the hospital.

They contacted Nova HomeWorks to see they could help with the installation of the carpet and the donation of some material. “By God’s grace we were able to donate the padding and all the labor for the install, but noticed that they needed more help,” Reed said. “I came back to the office, prayed and then emailed some of my business friends. By the next day, we had raised over $1,200 to pay for painting and a new dishwasher.”

Reed points not to himself nor to his generous business friends for their role in improving a sick child’s life. “We just kept praising the Lord,” he said. “By the end of this ‘mission trip,’ not only was my family and my office praising God, but many of the neighbors and those that had helped were giving God the glory for this wonderfully God-inspired humanitarian deed.”

Reed is just one of many ASI members who will share how through the power of the Holy Spirit they bring Christ into their workplace at the union’s upcoming ASI convention. The convention will be held Thursday through Sunday, March 8-11 at the Vienna (Va.) church. Click here for more information about the convention.
Leroy and Lois Peters, for the music center is named, cut the ribbon following the blessing of the building. At right is Provost Susan Hornshaw.

Washington Adventist University Dedicates Leroy and Lois Peters Music Center

Story and photo by Kevin Manuel
Published 1/18/12

With the completion of the center, the Department of Music will enjoy amenities that were not afforded in their previous home. The center includes percussion, voice and instrument studios, all with included acoustic insulation. The largest section of the building is the band/orchestra rehearsal hall, which takes up parts of the first and second floors.

The architect behind the blueprint, Shaughn MacGilvray, stayed close to the university's overall architecture, which is classical brick and concrete, during the design process. He also aimed to leave as small a carbon footprint as possible. This resulted in a two-story construction, which is compact enough to be environmentally friendly, yet spacious enough to be more than functional.

The grand opening of the building will take place during Alumni Weekend, April 13-15.
Faces of Faith: Edward Cafoncelli

Name, age, municipality where you reside: Edward Cafoncelli, 75, Riverview Park.

Church, volunteer work you do there and how long a member there: I am a founding member, along with Gary Yerger, of Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, a member of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Our church was founded on Dec. 1, 2006, which is also the date of our first service. Services were held in our home for about six months. We currently meet at the Reading Kenhorst Seventh-day Adventist Church, 333 N. Kenhorst Blvd.

Occupation: I'm retired from Verizon, where I was employed for 36 years.

Family members: Wife, Mary; two daughters, Robin Mollica and Debra Shope; and two granddaughters.

Favorite religious song: "Because He Lives."

Favorite nonreligious artists: Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman.

Favorite Bible verse: John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Hobbies and interests: Woodworking, photography and gardening.

What do you find most rewarding about volunteering at church? I find it rewarding to teach and preach the Lord's word. I also like to meet and greet people and make them feel at home. Our group also has helped to start a new church in Boyertown called Living Faith Lutheran Church, also a member of the AFLC. Their one year anniversary will be Jan. 15. We are in the process of calling a full-time pastor to serve both congregations.

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BY MARK A. KELLNER

It's an amazing story, the stuff of inspiring novels or feel-good Hollywood biopics that leave you with moist eyes as the credits begin to roll: a quiet kid from the northwestern United States comes out of nowhere to serve as part of the military honor guard at the White House, then goes on to earn multiple college degrees, and is now one of the "top 20" pastors in the nation's capital. Along the way he triumphs over severe dyslexia, career misplacement by the Air Force, even college counselors who want to discourage his dreams.

If all that sounds too good to be true, too much for one solitary life to contain, think again: in a nutshell, that's the life, so far, of Terry Johnsson, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor whose riveting story has been told in two books, and to hundreds of youth groups and other audiences. The 43-year-old bachelor preacher sums it up simply: "God really uses ordinary people. He does have a plan for all of our lives. His plans are bigger than our lives."

Of course, there's really a bit more than just that.

Where He's Coming From

To understand Terry Johnsson, we have to go back to an elementary school in Portland, Oregon; back to a time when budget cuts forced him into a class with more than 50 other students. Unable to read what was written on the blackboard—and no longer able to bluff or hide—Johnsson was branded as having a learning disability, with officials suggesting the youngster would be better in a residential school, where he could receive special attention.

Johnsson's mother, who'd become pregnant with Terry some 15 years after the last of his five other siblings had been born, had another idea. Her mother, Terry's grandmother, had said this "surprise" baby had been given for a purpose, and offered Jeremiah 29:11 as a life verse for the yet-to-be-born child: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

That confidence led Terry's mother to bring him to Columbia Christian, a nondenominational school in Portland, where a Mrs. Sherlock used a rather idiosyncratic teaching tool to get young Terry to read.

"All she used was the Bible, the old King James Version," Johnsson recalled. "She had taught me to 'sight read.' [With] my particular dyslexia, I have a very hard time with phonics, with breaking words down into phonics," he added. "She worked with me for six months, and at the end of it I was reading. It wasn't perfect, but I was reading for the first time in my life."

That reading, however accomplished, opened up a new world for Terry Johnsson. When he was 9, he and his mother were each baptized as members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; his father, tragically, had died a year before. This took Terry to Portland Adventist Junior Academy, and then Portland Adventist Academy (PAA), where his high school graduation almost didn't happen on time.

That would have been challenging for his grandmother, a self-supporting Christian missionary to Liberia who had started 13 girls schools there. Grandmother had saved to fly to Portland for his graduation, and told the teenage Johnsson she was dipping into her retirement savings to buy him a suit for the event. In a store parking lot Terry had to admit the truth, and a flood of sobs enveloped his words.

"My senior year at PAA I had taken all my classes except for one English class I was struggling with. It was English IV," he recalled, a quarter century later. "There was no way I would pass, no human way. I wasn't going to pass, and I would not graduate [with the rest of the class]."

Grandmother's response? "She said, 'Let's just pray.' She put her hand on my forehead and asked God, 'Give him faith that this is going to be OK,'" he said.

Then the unexpected happened: "Grandma said, 'Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus. . . . It's done.'"

She told a confused Terry: "The Lord told me you're going to get a bachelor's degree, then a master's, then a doctoral degree. I've heard the Lord a few times in my life, and never has it been more clear to me."

And what she said has since come to pass: "I did graduate from high school; in fact, I was asked to be one of the speakers. Then I went on to graduate from Oakwood College [now Oakwood University] with two degrees. Then I went..."
In the Master's Service

The chain of miracles was far from over in Terry Johnson's life. Having struggled throughout his academic career, he imagined a different career path, thinking his grades wouldn't make him a sought-after college prospect.

"I had gone over to the mall next door to our academy, and there was an Air Force recruiter," he said. The recruiter "told me the Air Force had chaplains, and I could be a chaplain's assistant. . . . I signed up, and I was so excited."

Johnson thought he'd have a year before entering the service, but the Air Force told him to report in two weeks. Then, after basic training in San Antonio, Texas, the military gave him another surprise: Terry Johnson was dropped off at military police school, not chaplaincy training.

Making the best of his lot, Terry began to train, and also led a Bible study in his barracks. Although a half-dozen airmen were studying the Scriptures together, the majority of military police were more ready to taunt Johnson than praise him. The laughter only grew when Johnson stepped onto the firing range for his first shooting test: none of his three shots even touched the target. The young man was "recycled" back to the start of the police training program.

This time he did better, and hosted a larger Bible study for his training officer. In exchange, the officer took Johnson to a local Seventh-day Adventist church every Sabbath. Oh, and there was one other thing: Johnson accompanied a friend to a tryout for the Air Force component of the presidential honor guard. The friend, a "poster boy for an Air Force airman," Johnson said, didn't make the cut; Terry did.

"If I had not missed that target," he recalled, "I would have been gone by the time the president's honor guard came around recruiting."

Instead, Johnson spent eight years at the White House, serving Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, and at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton.

"I never left Washington, D.C., my entire military career," Johnson explained. "I had started to speak to young people in academies and high schools. I'm the longest-serving honor guard up to this day. Then youth groups started asking me to speak. I would share this experience and tell them, 'If God could use me; I would be the least likely person to be standing next to the president [as an honor guard]; I was just encouraging young people to keep trusting God.'"

Finally, Johnson felt a distinct call to go into youth ministry. He resigned his eight-year hitch with the Air Force and decamped for Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. There an admissions counselor took one look at Johnson's academic record and had an idea.

"You can take a 12-week course here and be a Bible worker!" she said. "That's the best path for you, given your record."

Johnson, who recounted the story during a morning worship at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, summoned up his knowledge of bureaucracies from his military experience and said something the counselor didn't expect: "Thank you. May I speak with your supervisor, please?"

During the time it took for that supervisor to be found, Johnson paged through the Oakwood course catalogue. There he found a major in communications along with one in Bible. Johnson took both, even though he hardly imagined using his broadcast communications skills after graduation.

"The most unique thing was, when I graduated in 1993, President Clinton sent an award down from the National Dyslexic Association, to be read by [acting Oakwood president] Benjamin F. Reaves. They presented me a plaque from the White House and a letter to be read during graduation. I graduated in four years, like everybody else, but with two degrees, and one of those was in radio."

A Unique Role

There's a handful of "radio station pastors" in the United States, Johnson says, most of whom serve at corporately owned outlets such as southern California's K-LOVE FM. But Johnsson is the only Adventist radio pastor, and the station where he serves, WGTS FM in Takoma Park, Maryland, is not only the top Christian radio station in the region, it's the second-most popular Christian radio station in America. An estimated 600,000 people tune in to the Adventist station's programming every day, a virtual "congregation," if you will. That's slightly more than half the size of the North American Division's membership.

Of that number, at least 280,000, or 40 percent of the audience, don't belong to any church. That's given WGTS, and Johnson, an opportunity.

"We're getting more and more people who just listen to radio for their religious experience," he explained. These people might "have a church background, but their number one problem is busyness . . . [they have] no time for church."

That fact didn't sit too well with station general manager John Conrad: "If they're substituting radio for Christian fellowship, that's not a good thing," Johnson said, and his position came about.

His first project as a radio chaplain: find a way for listeners to have their prayer needs met. Johnson recruited some volunteers to staff telephone lines and pray, advertised on the air, and expected perhaps 50 requests the first week.
total of 507 came in, and the average remains at about 500 a week.

Next, Johnsson began a weekly meeting called "Gateway Fellowship," held at Takoma Adventist Academy in Takoma Park, Maryland, about a mile from the station. It’s not a traditional church, but rather an entry point for the unchurched.

"People can come and sing songs that they know from the radio and hear an inspirational message," Johnsson said. "Two times a quarter I teach a class, 'About Us,' so people can learn about the [Adventist Church] organization that sponsors this."

He added, people can take "About Him," a class about Jesus.

While visitors are welcome for as many weeks as they wish to attend, those who are ready for membership in a regular church are funneled to one of several partner congregations, matching a person’s interests and needs.

At least once a year the station also holds a "Night of Hope," where listeners can come, hear music and a message. About 20 to 30 percent of the hundreds who attend then continue on to the Gateway Fellowship meetings.

It’s not the traditional method of Seventh-day Adventist evangelism perhaps, but it’s working, and in one of the more hard-boiled communities in the United States, where political debates, national security, and other issues dominate much of daily life.

And all this is happening in the life of a boy whose second-grade teacher thought he needed residential care. Terry Johnsson has proved that overloaded teacher very wrong, and has a testimony that will resonate with many.

"It’s just amazing to me that people will come to me very discouraged, and [saying] 'God doesn’t care,' and I’m able to sit down with them, hear their life story, and point out to them, just like He did for me, God was there for you," Johnsson said. "That’s the way God works. He just works with some of us ordinary people."

It’s not considered nice to disagree with people, but somehow I can’t see Terry Johnsson—a man who’ll receive his doctorate from Wesley Theological Seminary in May 2012—as just "ordinary." He’s accomplished more at age 43 than many of us have, and he offers an inspiring example to us all.

Mark A. Kellner is news editor for Adventist Review and Adventist World. This article was published January 19, 2012.