As Youth Witness in Philadelphia, Faith Becomes Their Own

It’s a hot, sunny, summer afternoon in Philadelphia, perfect for lunching with friends or lounging by the pool. But that’s not where you’ll find Maile Hoffman. Clad in tan pants, a navy blue shirt and sneakers, this 18 year old is on a mission, and there’s nothing else she’d rather be doing.

Donning a shoulder bag, a two-way radio and plenty of “bread” (sharing books), she makes her way down 68th Avenue, climbs the stairs of the house on the corner, rings the bell and waits. Moments later a woman emerges and Hoffman, a member of Pennsylvania Conference’s Harrisburg church and a recent graduate of Blue Mountain Academy (BMA) in Hamburg, Pa., flashes her signature smile and opens her bag. A short while later, the woman purchases a book, Hoffman prays with her and heads to the next home.

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Capitol Hill Members Display Acts of Kindness on Sabbath

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The grocery and flower delivery was one of more than 15 service activities that Capitol Hill members participated in on a recent Sabbath. Instead of a regular Sabbath service, Gene M. Donaldson, DMin, the church’s senior pastor, set aside the day as “Acts of Kindness” Community Service Day. Donaldson said church members hoped to bring to life Luke 6:9, which says it is “lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”—Story by Michelle Riley Jones

READ MORE

Lay Members Preach, Baptize in Dominican Republic

Mariano Samayoa (pictured praying) is a member of Potomac Conference’s Takoma Park Spanish church in Takoma Park, Md. He is also a lay pastor. Last year Samayoa graduated from Potomac Conference’s School of Discipleship with an Assistant to the Pastor certificate. This summer he joined 24 lay and professional pastors from Ohio; Washington, D.C.; El Salvador and Costa Rica on a mission trip
to the Dominican Republic, where thousands accepted the Lord.

“It was amazing to see how the people receive God over there when you preach,” he said. “They rent a big space and people pay real attention when you talk about God. When you make the call to accept Jesus, a lot of people come.”

The missionaries combined preaching with distributing free healthcare and food. When asked how he feels about his eight days in the Dominican Republic, Samayoa said, “I can see that we really need this kind of project in the world.”—Story by Taashi Rowe/Potomac Conference Staff

Laicos colaboran llevando miles de personas a Cristo en la República Dominicana

Mariano Samayoa (abajo, derecho) es miembro de la iglesia Takoma Park Spanish, en Takoma Park, Md. y también un pastor laico. El hermano Samayoa se graduó el año pasado de la Escuela de Discipulado de Potomac Conference en donde obtuvo un certificado de Asistente Pastoral. Durante este verano, se unió a otros veinticuatro pastores-laicos y profesionales—de Ohio, Washington, D.C., El Salvador y Costa Rica como integrantes de un viaje misionero a la República Dominicana, en donde miles de personas aceptaron al Señor.

“Es sorprendente ver cómo la gente en ese lugar acepta a Dios cuando uno predica”, comenta Mariano. “Rentan un local bien grande y cuando se habla de Dios, ellos prestan mucha atención. Muchas personas pasan cuando se hace el llamado para aceptar a Jesús”.

Los misioneros combinaron la predicación con distribución de comida y atención médica gratuita. Al preguntarle cómo se siente después de esos ocho días en la República Dominicana, Mariano dijo: “Me doy cuenta que este es el tipo de proyecto que verdaderamente se necesita en el mundo”.—Por Taashi Rowe/Personal de Potomac Conference

LEA MAS Y VE MAS FOTOS
Kettering Adventist HealthCare Staff Dedicates Ollie Davis Pavilion

It was standing room only at the Ollie Davis Medical Arts and Education Center dedication, the newest facility opened by Kettering Adventist HealthCare, based in Kettering, Ohio. People from all over the healthcare network and the community came out to honor Ollie Davis, who donated the funds to build the medical office building at the Soin Medical Center, located in Beavercreek, Ohio.

Ollie Davis is a longtime Beavercreek commercial real estate developer and community healthcare advocate. Terry Burns, Soin Medical Center president, joined Fred Manchur (pictured), Kettering Adventist HealthCare CEO; Vicki Giambrione, Beavercreek mayor; and Raj Soin in honoring Davis for generously giving back to the community. The 107,000 square-foot, five-story pavilion will be devoted to leased space for physician offices and medical services.—Story by Kettering Adventist HealthCare Staff

Mysterious Benefactor Blesses Ohio Conference Church

Shortly before his closing remarks during a recent church service and communion, Pastor Patrick Mazani of the Bowling Green (Ohio) church saw a gentleman appear at the sanctuary door. Member Karen Griffith exited the sanctuary to greet him and asked if she could help. He handed her an envelope. As the gentleman hesitated, Griffith opened the envelope and pulled out a blank piece of paper with a cashier’s check.

Griffith asked the man if he would tell her the donor’s name. “That isn’t necessary,” the man replied. When asked why he was giving such a great gesture, he replied, “It’s because of all the good work your denomination does.”

Before leaving, Griffith (pictured) gave him a copy of Steps to Christ and The Master of Love and invited him to return each Sabbath for fellowship and a meal. He
declined and quickly exited. The amount of the check? $3,020.—Story by Ohio Conference Staff

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Charlottesville Church Draws Crowd, Media at Town Fair

Last Sabbath Potomac Conference’s Charlottesville (Va.) church participated in the Jefferson Park Avenue Street Fair. After situating a grand piano on a red carpet, surrounded by plants near the sidewalk, Rick Labate, pastor, gave a 25-minute piano concert every hour on the hour. Members from the Buena Vista (Va.) church provided a puppet show (pictured) every hour on the half hour, drawing a large crowd of children and parents.

Church members handed out almost 300 bottles of water, with labels reading, “Got Water? Whoever comes to Me shall never thirst again,” accompanied by the church’s address. Word of the church’s inventive participation drew attention from Charlottesville’s ABC affiliate, Channel 19, and NBC affiliate, Channel 29, each making it their top story.

Creative outreach and worship didn’t stop there. The church also hosted an outdoor, multigenerational Sabbath school and church service at 4 p.m. “I think the entire day brought a blessing to our church family and the community,” Labate said.—Story by Tiffany Doss

Correction: In the August 15 edition of the Visitor News Bulletin, we incorrectly identified the girls in the photo for a story titled “Spencerville Student Musicians Perform, Do Outreach in South Africa.” Pictured were Vanessa Baioni and her sister Juliana Baioni. We regret the error.

UPCOMING EVENTS
Click here for a complete listing of upcoming events around the Columbia Union Conference.

DELAWARE
August 25-September 22: Abundant Living and New Beginnings evangelism training seminars will take place all over the Columbia Union Conference. The DVDs have brought hundreds of thousands of
individuals to the Lord over the past decade. Each person who attends the training will receive two free DVDs, if he or she promises to use it within the next 12 months. The DVDs contain evangelistic presentations, each with its own outline guide, and are easy to use!

Upcoming trainings will be held: August 25 at the Sussex Central church located at 22514 Gravel Hill Road in Georgetown, Delaware; September 1 at the Waldorf church located at 11245 Berry Road in Waldorf, Md.; September 8 at the Northeast church located at 6200 Loch Raven Boulevard in Baltimore and at the Tranquility church located at 1 Academy Lane in Andover, N.J.; September 15 at the Robbinsville church located at 2314 Route 33 in Robbinsville N.J. and September 22 at the Perth Amboy Hungarian church located at 345 Alpine Street in Perth Amboy, N.J. For more information, email cuasi@columbiaunion.net.

ONLINE
August 27: "Let’s Move!" Day/Adventists InStep for Life Webinar. Many churches have been participating in the Adventists InStep for Life initiative sponsored by the North American Division (NAD). Several area churches are hosting a 5K fun run September 23, "Let’s Move!" Day. To find out how your church can be part of "Let’s Move!" Day, join a webinar August 27. To learn more, visit adventistsinstepforlife.org, or contact Deloris Bailey by email at deloris.bailey@nad.adventist.org or by phone at (301) 680-6000.

MARYLAND
September 8-9: Attend the REACH OUT Symposium and learn how to spread the gospel using a hands-on approach. Sponsored by the North American Division Adventist Community Services (ACS), the event features specialty tracks in crisis care taught by Steve Willsey—and community development and urban ministry—taught by Sung Kwon. The event is held at the Chesapeake Conference office located at 6600 Martin Road in Columbia, Md. The $30 registration fee covers materials and lunch each day. Register by August 28 by contacting Evelyn Gates at (410) 995-1910, or email egates@ccosda.org.

September 8-16: Messiah’s Mansion is a full-scale model of the wilderness temple built by Moses and the Israelites as instructed by God after He led them out of Egypt. Free tours will take place in Hagerstown, Md., between 1 and 7 p.m. During the tour, you will learn many things about the historical temples of old, as well as the meanings of the symbols shown to us throughout the sanctuary and what they mean to us today. The mansion will be located on the grounds of the Review and Herald Publishing Association at 55 West Oak Ridge. For more information, call (301) 733-4411.

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To send us a news story, email us at visitor@columbiaunion.net. The deadline for all submissions is 10 a.m. each Tuesday.

Stay Connected:

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Tara VinCross, senior pastor at the Chestnut Hill church, also serves as a mentor, motivator and cheerleader to young people ministering in the Pennsylvania Youth Challenge summer program.

As Youth Witness in Philadelphia, Faith Becomes Their Own
Story by Celeste Ryan Blyden
Published 8/21/12

It’s a hot, sunny, summer afternoon in Philadelphia, perfect for lunching with friends or lounging by the pool. But that’s not where you’ll find Maile Hoffman. Clad in tan pants, a navy blue shirt and sneakers, this 18 year old is on a mission, and there’s nothing else she’d rather be doing. Donning a shoulder bag, a two-way radio and plenty of “bread” (sharing books), she makes her way down 68th Avenue, climbs the stairs of the house on the corner, rings the bell and waits. Moments later a woman emerges and Hoffman, a member of Pennsylvania Conference’s Harrisburg church and a recent graduate of Blue Mountain Academy (BMA) in Hamburg, Pa., flashes her signature smile and opens her bag. A short while later, the woman purchases a book, Hoffman prays with her and heads to the next home.

“Sometimes we’re the only Bible that people read,” she says. That’s why she’s spending her summer living with a host family, canvassing Philadelphia’s neighborhoods and sharing her faith.

Hoffman is one of 31 youth participating in the 2012 Pennsylvania Youth Challenge (PYC) headed by Tara VinCross, senior pastor of the Chestnut Hill church here.

PYC, Pastor VinCross shares, is a program for youth and young adults, where they are discipled in what it looks like to follow Jesus and serve Him. “For nine weeks they are immersed in Bible studies and devotional habits where they learn how to read and understand the Bible for themselves, prayer journaling, sharing testimonies door to door, meeting strangers and sharing the love of Jesus with them and doing community service projects. The bulk of their time is spent going door to door sharing the good news of God’s love and of Jesus’ soon return,” she explains. In the process, “their faith becomes their own, they take hold of Jesus for themselves and they get to see what it looks like for Him to use them.”
Since she started the program in 2009, 100 young adults have participated from across the conference and beyond, and VinCross has seen God take hold of many of them, including Giselle Satterwhite, 21, a nursing student at the renowned Temple University in center city. She was down and depressed until two friends started giving her Bible studies. When she joined VinCross’s PYC team, she says her life was transformed. “Just seeing how God is using me here strengthened my faith,” she says. “He’s faithful, and I feel like this is what I’m supposed to do with my life.”

So does her friend Delon Lawrence, 24, who earned a telecommunications and broadcasting degree from Temple, but now serves as one of seven ministry interns who live and work in this community at one of two ministry houses donated by Chestnut Hill church members. “You can do God’s work in corporate America, but I believe God called me to do hands-on work in the field,” he shares. One way he does that is by engaging in a barber ministry in the community. This allows him to connect with residents, engage them in spiritual conversations and invite them to his home church—REACH Philadelphia.

REACH Philadelphia is a church plant that meets at a community recreation center about 20 minutes from the Chestnut Hill church and doubles as an internship program for young adults like Lawrence who feel called to ministry. Each week, they invite people who come to the playground or basketball courts to eat lunch with them. Then they engage these visitors in Bible study and prayer followed by a worship service with a message by VinCross or one of her associate pastors. “It’s very interactive and down to earth,” she says. “We’re uplifting Jesus there, and people are drawn to that. It’s a fun location that God has brought us to be because we get to interact with so many people.”

What started as a small group meeting on Friday nights in her living room now includes 40 people worshiping in a community recreation center on Sabbath afternoons. After about a month, the director told them, “You’re actually about the community, so we don’t feel comfortable charging you.”

New member Justin McLaughlin, 20, is glad they’re “about” the community because that’s where he was before he found his way to REACH and to God. Shortly after his baptism into the Seventh-day Adventist faith in March (an interesting story in itself), he joined the fledgling church plant and has been working to reach others fulltime.

“When I found God, I finally found everything I was searching for; I know others are searching for the same thing and I just want to share [Christ] with them,” he says. Participating in the PYC and REACH programs as a ministry intern is helping him grow in his newfound faith. “It’s a great process; it made me realize how much closer I need to grow to God, it’s taught me more about...
trusting Him and it has strengthened my faith and prepared me for ministry.”

And that’s what Pastor VinCross and her Chestnut Hill church leaders envisioned some five years ago when they launched this initiative. “This quaint, beautiful church has been here for 60 years in the second wealthiest neighborhood in Philly, and though consistent, they’d never seen God do dramatic things for His kingdom here,” she recalls. She and her leaders prayed, read about the early church in Acts, studied Ellen White’s call for mission to the cities and watched to see what God would do for them and through them.

Today they have a thriving 200-member church with numerous ministries and a vegetarian supper club, two ministry houses, a ministry internship program, the REACH Philadelphia church plant with a regular attendance of 40, and a slew of baptisms to show for it. They also organize the Pennsylvania Youth Challenge in cities across their conference. For VinCross, this is nothing short of an answer to prayer. “Watching what happens when people see that God loves [them] and He wants to use [them] is why I’m in this,” she admits. “It’s completely why I’m here.”

She’s also here for the youth, not only serving as their pastor but as their mentor, motivator and cheerleader. After rejoicing with Hoffman over her experience, she heads down the street to see how another of her summer charges is faring.

Joan Batiz-Hernandez is just 16, a junior at BMA, and a member of the First Spanish church of Philadelphia. She can’t wait to update Pastor VinCross on her experience. She recounts how she was walking down her assigned street when she noticed an older couple getting into their car. She sold them Peace Above the Storm and then started showing the wife the contents of the book. When she flipped to a hymn, she started singing and the woman started singing with her because she remembered some of the words. After enjoying the moment together, they laughed, prayed, hugged and the couple drove away.

“Wow!” exclaimed Batiz-Hernandez. “I feel like they were here waiting for me. … God is so good. … This is not a job that gets old because there are people searching for something, and I’m glad God can use me to bring them a Hope they didn’t know.”

Learn more at vimeo.com/paconference.

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There are no comments.

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Learn more at vimeo.com/paconference.
Capitol Hill Members Display Acts of Kindness on Sabbath
Story by Michelle Riley Jones
Published 8/22/12

"How did you know it was my birthday?" asked one delighted senior when several members of the Capitol Hill church in Washington, D.C., showed up on his doorstep with flowers and groceries.

That reaction is exactly "why I grow my flowers—to brighten the lives of those in need!" said Dan Price, an area resident who hand-cut more than 1,000 flowers from his personal garden for the Allegheny East Conference church's We Are Family Senior Grocery Delivery outreach.

The grocery and flower delivery was one of more than 15 service activities that Capitol Hill members participated in on a recent Sabbath. Instead of a regular Sabbath service, Gene M. Donaldson, DMin, the church's senior pastor, set aside the day as "Acts of Kindness" Community Service Day. Donaldson said church members hoped to bring to life Luke 6:9, which says it is "lawful to do good on the Sabbath."
The day, which began as early as 7 a.m., involved more than 300 Capitol Hill members, including children, families and seniors. Under the leadership of Michele Gamble, the church’s community services leader, the church partnered with local community partners who identified areas of needs in the community. Members then signed up for one or more projects online. Some of the projects included writing messages of thanks to soldiers overseas, engaging in a neighborhood prayer walk, cleaning up a play area for homeless children, caring for trees, feeding the homeless, offering resume help, visiting a hospice and hosting a health fair.

At the end of the day, Capitol Hill members received words and notes of appreciation from the many people they helped, including from Rev. Herbert Brisbon of the Capitol Hill United Methodist Church. “This is wonderful what you are doing for the community!” he exclaimed. “We would like to partner with you for future efforts in our community!”

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There are no comments.
Laicos colaboran llevando miles de personas a Cristo en la República Dominicana
Por Taashi Rowe/Personal de Potomac Conference
Publicado el 8/16/2012

Unas veinticinco personas, en su mayoría laicos y unos pocos pastores de Ohio, Washington, D.C., El Salvador, y Costa Rica recientemente abordaron un avión rumbo a la República Dominicana. Tan pronto como aterrizaron en Santo Domingo, la capital del país, se pusieron a trabajar y empezaron a predicar en cincuenta y seis centros evangélicos preparados por los administradores de dos Asociaciones de la iglesia local.

En cada centro había por lo menos cien visitantes, por lo que un total de seis mil quinientos visitantes se reunieron durante los ocho días de reuniones para cantar, leer la Biblia y escuchar los sermones acerca de Dios. Rubén Ramos, asistente del presidente para los ministerios multilingües de Columbia Union Conference y cuatro pastores de Columbia Union acompañaron a los predicadores laicos mientras estos predicaban, participaban del servicio a la comunidad, distribuían alimentos y entregaban invitaciones para las reuniones.

“En la iglesia donde yo prediqué”, dice el pastor Ramos, “llegaban unas doscientas personas cada noche. Estaba muy impresionado de ver cómo la gente venía libremente a la iglesia, sin prejuicios. Era raro ver una cabeza blanca dentro de la concurrencia, ¡sorprendente!”

Este viaje fue uno de los últimos que APEECT [centro educacional, evangelístico, filantrópico y de salud adventista, por sus siglas en inglés] programó, un grupo local cuya misión es ayudar a los pobres, proclamar la Palabra, sanar al sufriente y predicar acerca de Cristo. Desde el 2006 los miembros de este grupo han estado visitando algunos países latinoamericanos como El Salvador y Honduras. En sus visitas trabajan con las iglesias locales distribuyendo alimentos y útiles escolares, brindan atención médica y comparten el amor de Dios. En el 2008 Loma Linda University y su escuela de medicina (Calif.) envió unos treinta estudiantes de medicina a trabajar con los salvadoreños.

El viaje sirvió también como un laboratorio práctico para quienes se graduaron de la escuela de teología de Potomac Conference, en donde los laicos aprenden todos los detalles sobre el evangelismo y el estudio de la Biblia. De los veintiún predicadores, dieciocho eran graduados de esta escuela.

“Fue un festín espiritual, y realmente hicieron la diferencia”, dijo Raúl Rodríguez, pastor de la iglesia Takoma Park Spanish, de la Potomac Conference en Takoma Park (Md.), ora por sanidad en el matrimonio de esta pareja.
iglesia Capital Spanish en Washington, D.C., y uno de los organizadores del viaje. “La mayoría de los resultados vinieron de los laicos! Creo que cuando los pastores de las Asociaciones creen en sus laicos y les confían la predicación en las iglesias, entonces será posible que hagan grandes cosas para el Señor”.

Mariano Samayoa, oriundo de El Salvador, dueño de un negocio y miembro de la iglesia Takoma Park Spanish en Takoma Park, Md., es también un pastor laico. Él se graduó el año pasado de la Escuela de Discipulado con un certificado de asistente de pastor, pero ha estado participando en estos viajes misioneros desde el principio.

Como en años anteriores, él tuvo la oportunidad de utilizar su capacitación. “Es emocionante ver cómo la gente recibe a Dios en esos lugares cuando uno predica”, nos dijo. “Alquilan un lugar grande y la gente verdaderamente presta atención cuando se habla de Dios. Cuando usted hace un llamado a aceptar a Jesús, mucha gente pasa”.

Al final de nuestro programa de este año 2,631 fueron bautizados, se repartieron 2,500 bolsas de alimentos y el grupo recolectó suficiente dinero para que 2,300 pacientes fueran a recibir atención médica gratuita al hospital Adventista del Séptimo Día en Santo Domingo.

Cuando le preguntamos al hermano Samayoa cómo se siente después de estos ocho días en la República Dominicana nos dijo: “Me doy cuenta que este es el tipo de proyecto que verdaderamente se necesita en el mundo”.

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