The December Visitor Shares Stories About the Blessings of Giving

"I was a teen dad, drug addict and lost. I've been through the ringer and made it out. I recognize the struggle some young people go through," says Olietunja “Ollie” Mann.
His wife, Maria, says she endured her own challenges growing up. But, it was those experiences that continue to help the couple make connections with the young people in their community and at Allegheny West Conference’s Westside church in Cleveland where they are members. They knew they were called to do something special—pulling from their pasts help them understand today’s young people. As a result, teens find in them someone who will listen and provide mentoring and guidance where no one else does.

Read more of our cover story and these other stories below!

It is More Blessed to Give: Maddings on a Mission
’Tis the Season to Give: Ways you can use your time to impact others this holiday season.

Christmas Unwrapped

Artículo especial de Visitor: Más bienaventurado es dar que recibir

En la edición de este mes de la revista Visitor, nos centraremos en tres familias para las cuales dar es una parte muy importante de su estilo de vida.

Una de esas familias está formada por Douglas y Rosa Salguero de Fredericksburg, Va. Su iglesia considera que Rosa es la Dorcas bíblica moderna de su iglesia. Disfruta ayudando a otros y se siente mejor cuando da que cuando recibe. Aunque recientemente perdió su trabajo, considera que siempre hay una manera de ayudar. Cuando los hermanos de iglesia le dicen que hay una familia que necesita alimentos, organiza una recolección de alimentos para la familia. Cuando hay un evento en la iglesia, rápidamente prepara comida para compartir con los hermanos. Cuando su familia en El Salvador le dice que hay una familia en ese país que tiene poco o nada de ropa, organiza una recolección de ropa y envía cajas llenas de ropa a miles de kilómetros de distancia, para familias que no conoce. “Estar activos ayuda”, dice Rosa. “Al ayudar a otros de manera activa, podemos aprender más acerca del amor de Dios”.

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"I was a teen dad, drug addict and lost. I’ve been through the ringer and made it out. I recognize the struggle some young people go through," says Olietunja “Ollie” Mann. His wife, Maria, says she endured her own challenges growing up. But, it was those experiences that continue to help the couple make connections with the young people in their community and at Allegheny West Conference’s Westside church in Cleveland where they are members. They knew they were called to do something special—pulling from their pasts help them understand today’s young people. As a result, teens find in them someone who will listen and provide mentoring and guidance where no one else does. The Manns also raised four children, who are now young adults, and continue to serve as youth directors at their church with several ministries. They have always made sure to be available to their children and for their home to be a place where they felt comfortable hanging out with their friends. “Our house is where they all come to, with their issues and all. We want to be sure to be available,” says Ollie. On any given night, they have a house full of young people. They take time to learn about their struggles and have been able to minister to their needs. And, many times, those needs have gone beyond a simple word of advice. The Manns have become mentors to some of the young people, even “temporary parents” to others. In fact, Ollie and Maria have provided a temporary home to 10 young people over the years. You can almost hear a smile in the words as Maria admits, “Our home has a revolving door. My mom always taught me that if I had enough for me, I had enough for the community.” They admit it is not always easy to house more people, especially since they are usually young people without work or direction, and some with a lot of problems. But, the Manns have made it a point to treat each of them like their own children, including the enforcement of a few simple rules: they must attend church, go to school and leave negativity at the door. Regardless of the challenges, Ollie and Maria say the rewards have been immense. They remember one young man who arrived after having a falling out with his mom. He felt he needed to find himself and arrived at their doorstep with nothing. The Manns took him in.
Within weeks of honoring the house rules, this young man had acquired a job, started attending church with them and found direction in his life. His story is repeated in so many other young people who have passed through their home. Some have even joined the church and been baptized. But, regardless of where they continue on in life, one thing is certain, Ollie and Maria make sure to stay in contact with each one of them, always making themselves available and offering words of encouragement and advice. On occasion, some of their “temporary children” will even return to stay with them for a few days.

The best thing for this generation, say the Manns, is to meet the young people where they are, but not excuse where they are. The couple agrees that they, like all Christians, are still in their walk with God, so they don’t believe their job is to tell the young people what to do, but to invite them on the journey. Although their work with young people seems like an additional full-time job, they know it is what God has meant for them to do. “It’s an investment,” says Ollie. “The young people are the church, and we might not get another chance to live a sermon for these kids. Young people and adults in church today feel a great divide, but it doesn’t have to be like that. They need to know they are worth something. We need to show them that. It could even be as simple as a handshake after church.”

The Manns will continue to leave their revolving door open to young people as long as God continues to guide young people to that door. Sylvia Garcia Urrutia is a member of the Arise church in Temple Hills, Md.

**Check out these other articles from the December Visitor:**
- More Blessed to Give—Maddings on a Mission
- Ways you can use your time to impact others this holiday season
- Christmas Unwrapped

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It is More Blessed to Give: Maddings on a Mission

Story by Sylvia Garcia Urrutia Published 11/?/2013

When a typical family plans their vacation, some of the first items that make it to the must-have list are pools and waterslides, Disney princesses and comfy resort beds. But the Madding family, who attend Pennsylvania Conference’s Kenhorst Boulevard church in Reading, is anything but typical. Their list of vacation must-haves is a community in need, people who yearn to know Jesus and a local family willing to take them in.

“Mission work is in our blood. It is something we have always done as a couple, so we knew that when we had children, we wanted to make it a part of their life as well,” recalls Andrea about the decision she and Tim made early in their marriage. So, when their son, Ethan, turned 10, they decided it was time to start their tradition of service-focused family vacations. Ethan remembers when his parents first told him about the mission trip vacation idea: “At first I was shocked, but then excited about it!” After experiencing two of these vacations, he says they are well worth it.

Tim and Andrea wanted to make sure that Ethan’s first mission trip experience was positive, so they merged it with a cruise. It was not a mission trip-specific cruise but included stops in towns they had served as a couple. With a little extra planning, Tim and Andrea lined up mission opportunities at each port stop. Their main goal: to have Ethan involved as much as possible. The first sign of the positive impact they were making came when they returned from one of their stops. As the Madding family joined other cruise patrons around a table for dinner, talk turned to what everyone had done during the last port stop. While some talked of exciting tourist attractions or exotic animal sightings, young Ethan shocked the strangers by excitedly reporting that his family “cleaned windows” at one stop and that he preached his first sermonette at another. It thrilled their fellow travelers to hear of the Madding’s unique vacation, and they continued to ask for updates on their latest mission adventures. It became clear that the Madding’s mission impact went beyond their work at each port.

For their latest mission trip vacation this year, the Maddings hosted a 10-day evangelistic series in the Dominican Republic. While Andrea, a physical therapist, gave health lectures during the day, Tim, who is the director of Leadership and Spiritual Growth at the Pennsylvania Conference, preached each evening. Again, they involved Ethan as much as they could, this time giving him the responsibility of preaching the main sermon on both Sabbath mornings and assisting Tim with the equipment each night. To add to their experience, they fully immersed themselves in the culture. For 10 days, they lived with the locals and ate their food. This helped them relate to the people on a different level, the family says. At the end of their stay, the Madding family was able to witness 16 baptisms as a result of their evangelism, with 20 more people starting Bible studies in preparation for baptism. This type of mission trip really instilled in their family that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide denomination, says Tim. But to Tim and Andrea, the biggest impact from these trips can be felt in their home. The vacations have sparked in Ethan, who is homeschooled, a love for ministry. He prepared and preached his first full-length sermons in the Dominican Republic, and since returning, has already volunteered to preach at local churches.
were putting away the equipment from the meeting, and I was telling Ethan how sometimes we can prepare our sermons, but really, when it's time to speak, sometimes the Holy Spirit will take over and just speak through us. I remember Ethan turning to me and saying, 'Dad, before I preached this sermon, I didn’t feel fully prepared, but when I started preaching, that’s exactly how I felt, like the Holy Spirit took over and preached through me.’” For Tim, that made all the hard work worth it. “You cannot imagine what a father feels when he hears something like that. That’s why we do this,” he says.

Sylvia Garcia Urrutia is a member of the Arise church in Temple Hills, Md.

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Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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were putting away the equipment from the meeting, and I was telling Ethan how sometimes we can prepare our sermons, but really, when it’s time to speak, sometimes the Holy Spirit will take over and just speak through us. I remember Ethan turning to me and saying, ‘Dad, before I preached this sermon, I didn’t feel fully prepared, but when I started preaching, that’s exactly how I felt, like the Holy Spirit took over and preached through me.’” For Tim, that made all the hard work worth it. “You cannot imagine what a father feels when he hears something like that. That’s why we do this,” he says.

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‘Tis the Season to Give: Ways you can use your time to impact others this holiday season

By Sylvia Garcia Urrutia Published 11/26/2013

“You can change the world a little—or a lot. Here are some ways you can use your time to impact others this holiday season:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Seconds</td>
<td>Smile at someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Minute</td>
<td>Surprise your waitress/waiter with a note to thank them for their great service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Minutes</td>
<td>Pay for the person behind you in a drive-thru line. Log on to wgts919.com and click on “Drive-Thru Difference” for their details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Minutes</td>
<td>Donate time or prayers to ADRA, or purchase an animal or water well for a family overseas in need through their Really Useful Gift Catalog. Visit adra.org and click on “Get Involved.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
<td>Support or thank our troops overseas. Go to operationgratitude.com for a list of ways to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Minutes</td>
<td>At homelessshelterdirectory.org, get a list of homeless shelters near you, where you can organize a clothing or food drive or volunteer your time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Hour</td>
<td>Follow the example of Steve Chavez, managing editor of the Adventist Review, and spend your lunch break picking up trash in the community near your work site.</td>
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</table>
**1 Day** | Help Habitat for Humanity build a house for someone in need—no experience necessary! Log on to habitat.org and click on “Get Involved.”

**1 Week** | Use your Christmas holiday to “vacation with a purpose.” Get more details at cruisewithamission.org.

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"Boycott Christmas!" I gasped, staring with disbelief at the words on my computer screen. My browsing had led me to a website bidding me to join the “Christmas Resistance Movement” and rebel against the consumerism and materialism of the holidays. In my heart, I reflected on my own family’s holiday rituals, and I had to admit, for the most part, that we, too, had fallen into the excesses of Christmas consumerism. Except for my daughter, Grace. She had recently broken the ranks by announcing that, in lieu of gifts for herself, she wanted family and friends to make donations so she could participate in a spring break mission trip to the Dominican Republic, where she could serve, give and meet the needs of others. Her example was a powerful reminder to me about the real reason for the season. The Blessing of Giving

Acts 20:35 says: “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (NKJV).

This year amidst the steady, pounding drum beat of holiday consumerism and materialism, a different spirit vies for our attention—the spirit of giving. Recent scientific research has drawn a strong link between giving and happiness. Giving makes us feel happier and can actually improve our health. When we give, whether it be donations of money, random acts of kindness or service, we are happier, healthier and enjoy a greater sense of well-being. Many people will give during the holidays, and they will be happier because of it. Will you be one of them? When we give to others, our own hearts become “unscrooged.”

I’m not ready to boycott Christmas, but I hope above the din of the holidays, I will hear and respond to God’s call for me to be a giver. He desires that I answer it, not only during the season of giving, but long after the tree and lights come down. May this holiday be a starting
point to a life of year-round giving, resulting in a truly happy new year.

Frank Bondurant serves as vice president for Ministries Development for the Columbia Union Conference.

More articles from the December Visitor:
It is More Blessed to Give: Maddings on a Mission
Are Childfree Couples Accepted in our Church?--coming soon!
Articulo Especial de Visitor: Mejor es dar

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