Weekly News From Around the Columbia Union Conference

April 2, 2014

Maryland Comptroller Honors Adventist HealthCare CEO

Peter Franchot (pictured right), comptroller for the state of Maryland, recently honored William “Bill” G. Robertson (left), outgoing president and chief executive officer of Adventist HealthCare (AHC). Robertson, who ends his 14-year tenure at the helm of AHC this week, received a certificate of recognition, which states:

“In recognition of your exceptional tenure as the President and CEO of Adventist HealthCare. With special appreciation for the health care system’s success and contributions under your leadership to the State of Maryland, the regional economy and, most important of all, to the health and well-being of our citizens.”

While presenting the certificate to Robertson at AHC’s headquarters in Gaithersburg, Md., Franchot said, “I’ve known a lot of healthcare leaders, but there
aren’t any that can hold a candle to you. Thank you for your innovation, leadership and stamina.”—Story by Danielle Dewald/Adventist HealthCare Prism

WAU Hosts 100 Adventist University Presidents for Lunch

Some 100 presidents of Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities from around the world recently attended a luncheon on the campus of Washington Adventist University (WAU) in Takoma Park, Md. The luncheon was held at Sligo church on March 27, and was part of the weeklong International Conference for Colleges and University Presidents that began at the General Conference headquarters.

President Weymouth Spence, EdD, greeted the 120 luncheon attendees, and Zack Plantak, professor of religious studies, offered the prayer. Music professors Daniel Lau and Preston Hawes provided background music on the piano and violin, respectively. A bus tour of Washington, D.C., followed the luncheon, and three WAU professors went along to serve as tour guides and discuss the theme of religious freedom.—Story by WAU Staff

Spencerville Broadcast Journalism Students Attend Film Festival
Four broadcast journalism students from Spencerville Adventist Academy in Spencerville, Md., recently attended SONScren, the annual Seventh-day Adventist film festival held at Southern Adventist University (Tenn.). While there they attended the screening of the much-anticipated PBS documentary about Adventist education, *The BLUE PRINT*, directed and produced by Martin Doblmeier. "This was of special interest to the students since two of last year’s broadcast journalism students … were asked … to contribute footage to the film," said Robert Martinez, class instructor.

Students also attended workshops about lighting and documentary film directing. This year’s class is producing their second original film called *The Tiger’s Table*. "I came back [from SONScren] with more passion to finish the film," remarked Kayenda Twesigye, a junior and producer for the film. Pictured left to right is Martinez with students Cory Shim, Lexie Sweeney, Twesigye and Nathaniel Stone. —Story by Heidi Wetmore

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**Potomac Members Help Spanish-Speaking Students Earn GEDs**

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When a teacher asks a student to stay after class, it's not generally good news. But for Claudia Pretel, a Potomac Conference member who teaches a GED class for Spanish speakers, this was her chance for ministry. After class, the gentleman was apologetic and expected to be reprimanded as he had not been paying attention in class and had not done well on the homework. Instead, Pretel told him she was worried about him and asked if she could pray with him.

“He started crying,” she recalled. “He told me that his wife was dying. I asked him if I could hug him. The Holy Spirit gave me the words to talk to him. I told him that God loves him and his wife. I prayed for him, gave him a verse for the Bible and told him to buy his wife flowers and tell her that he loves her.”

These are just some of the stories that Pretel (pictured right with two other teachers) hears every day while she carries out this ministry that God has laid on her heart.—Story by Taashi Rowe

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58 graduados de las clases para el diploma GED de Potomac

Claudia Pretel, quien está en la fotografía junto a uno de los 58 graduados del diploma GED, ayudó a crear el programa GED para personas de habla hispana en 2012. Pretel, cuyo esposo Olives Villamizar es pastor de las iglesias hispanas de Bristow, Culpepper y Bealeton de Potomac Conference al norte de Virginia, involucró a toda su familia en el programa y espera poder ofrecer esta clase durante el presente año.—Historia por Taashi Rowe

Allegheny West Teachers Learn Benefits of Robotics Program
Allegheny West Conference (AWC) teachers did more than mull over educational theory at their recent in-service session. As a matter of fact, for most of the day, teachers tinkered, measured, programmed, tested and received a crash course in robotics.

Led by Robert Henley (pictured), communication director for the Southeastern Conference, the session revealed how the educators can harvest robotics technology and improve the atmosphere at their conference schools: Columbus Adventist Academy in Columbus, Ohio, and Ramah Junior Academy in Cleveland.

“We can transform schools into STEM academies,” said Henley, referring to the country’s push to drastically improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education so that the abundance of jobs in those fields will not go unfilled. “You can become academic powerhouses. You can change the branding of your schools just by doing this,” added Henley, who leads the robotics program at Forest Lake Education Center (Fla.) and hosts a 10-day robotics camp each summer.—Story by Tamaria L. Kulemeka

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New Jersey Church Hosts First Winter Welcome Home Gala
Members of New Jersey Conference’s Lake Nelson church in Piscataway recently held their first Winter Welcome Home Gala for the largest contingent of youth away at college in recent years. More than 100 young adults from churches throughout the conference, and even from New York, attended the gala. Yari Rosario served as the keynote speaker and Steven Hernandez was the emcee. Many parents in the church helped with food preparations and decorations that created a festive atmosphere.

Organizers said the gala not only provided a wholesome environment for college-aged kids to spend time together, but it was also a low-pressure way for youth to bring their friends who are not Adventist to church. Youth shared that they appreciated the love and support shown to them.—Story by Baba Jide Oluyemi

Columbia Union Members Named Mr. and Miss Oakwood

On March 23, students at Oakwood University (Ala.) elected Mr. and Miss Oakwood at the “Statue of Virtue” pageant. Both are members of churches in the Columbia Union.

Miss Oakwood, Nia Johnson, is a junior international studies major whose home church is Allegheny East Conference’s Capitol Hill church in Washington, D.C. She is the first Capitol Hill member to hold this title. Mr. Oakwood, Jordan Harris, is a junior nursing major from Dayton, Ohio, whose home church is the Kettering church in Kettering.

Both students will represent the university by exemplifying its Christian principles and mission. Congratulations to them both!—Story by Zawadi Nicholas/Inside Oakwood and Michelle Riley Jones; Photo by Jyremy Reid

Pennsylvania Members Stage an “Extreme Makeover” Party
When a church social team gets together to plan the year’s activities, typical ideas include game night, a picnic at the local park, a skating party or a banquet—all fun ideas. But the party planning team for Pennsylvania Conference’s Grace Outlet church in Reading had a different idea.

Meggan Shobe, a party planner, recently came to her teammates with a heartache. Her best friend was in the middle of turmoil, in more ways than one, and needed a home for herself and her three children. Fortunately, Shobe knew of a place available. Unfortunately, the place was in rough shape: walls needed painting, floors needed replacing, and the bathrooms and kitchen needed full repair.

Without hesitation, the Grace Outlet team decided they would do an “Extreme Makeover: Grace Outlet Edition” for their February social event. Families were invited to come out and clean, paint, donate, spackle, hammer and do whatever they felt impressed to do for this family in need. Pictured is member Lauren Penkala.—Story by Amy Newman

Ohio's Eastwood Student Recognized for Informal Leadership Skills
Even though Zachary Allen-Thierry, an eighth-grader at Eastwood Jr. Academy in Westerville, Ohio, is not an official student leader, his teachers have named him informal leader for the 2013-14 school year. Why? “Zach has demonstrated emotional intelligence leadership this school year,” explains Darwyn Allen, principal. “He read with intent the book Messiah, he always dresses for success in his blue blazer every Monday and Friday, he has helped a first-grader learn and memorize a poem, he has been supportive of his peers who are leading out, has been attentive to formal leaders during worship assemblies and keeps a positive spirit in a dim light.”

Alison Jobson, Ohio Conference’s superintendent of schools, says of Allen-Thierry, “What a blessing to hear of outstanding Adventist students who are making a positive impact on their communities and the rest of the world. May God continue to guide and uplift this young man of God.”

5 Questions for Emanuel Pelote
Emanuel Pelote, the owner of Intelligent Design Systems, a technology consulting company that creates databases and Web applications, lives in Washington, D.C., and attends Allegheny East Conference's Fourth Street Friendship church. Since taking up the mantel as president of the Columbia Union Chapter of Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (CUASI) last year, he's been working with his board of business owners and ministry makers to find ways to increase membership. In an email interview he shared more about himself and his passion for ministry:

Q: Why do you hope members across our union will attend this year's convention, April 17-19, in Bethesda, Md.?

A: Have you ever noticed that so many people just assume that the passion in their faith has to die down and grow a little colder the longer they remain in the church? Or that our life as Adventists isn’t supposed to continue to be life changing after the first couple years? A fellow ASI member just today quoted Proverbs 11:25 to me which says that “he who waters will be watered himself” (NIV). We want the Adventists of the Columbia Union to be truly alive for Christ, and we know that the way to do that is to answer His calling on our lives. That’s really why our theme this year is “Answering the Call.” When we come together and work together across cultures, conferences and congregations to answer His call, then He will breathe new life and power into His people.—Interview by Celeste Ryan Blyden

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April Visitor Calendar Model Gives Relationship Advice
Are you making a big life decision? Lester Smalls, the April *Visitor Calendar* model, has some relationship advice to give:

“You can’t really trust your feelings,” says this a member of Potomac Conference’s Capital Memorial church in Washington, D.C. “Young people should seek God through prayer first for their relationship answers. If I had to do things over, I would not just trust my feelings. I’d put most of my trust in the Lord through prayer.”

He also wishes people would spend more time truly communicating. “People today spend more time with their instruments than they do face to face. It is such a waste to not experience the presence of someone else,” he says.

**WATCH THE VIDEO HERE**

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**Nominate Your Favorite Teacher for The BLUEPRINT Award**

During multiple screenings for the documentary, The BLUEPRINT: The Story of Adventist Education, several longtime Adventist educators will be recognized with The BLUEPRINT Award. Conferences are now selecting nominees. Contact the education department of your local conference to suggest an individual whose classroom ministry embodies a vision of excellence and service that helped shape the future of individual students and the communities, or an individual whose administrative or leadership ministry helped in the establishment and growth of the ministry of Adventist education.

A complete list of the awardees from across the North American Division will be published as part of Education Sabbath, April 26. Each conference may nominate up to four recipients.

**Columbia Union Members in the Media**
Columbia Woman Elected Mid-Atlantic Adventist Church Vice President

VIDEO: Chesapeake Pastor Participates in Hope Channel Show

Washington Adventist University to begin building ballfield

Highland Adventist students learn survival skills

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARYLAND

April 5: The Metropolitan church in Hyattsville, Md., presents “Praise on Sax.” This evening will include instrumental praise and worship by saxophonists Leighton Kennedy and Courtney Fadlin. The concert starts at 6 p.m. The church is located at 6307 Riggs Road. Admission is free; however they suggest a $10 offering.

April 6: Join the Middletown Valley Church for a "Power Smoothies and Juices" class on at 3 p.m. Learn how you can have all the whole fruits and vegetables your body needs in a fast, convenient way. Demonstrations and tastings will also include kale salad, quinoa tabbouleh salad, hummus and more. Cost: $8/person or $5 for Frederick Memorial Hospital employees. Register by April 1 at mysdachurch.org. The church is located at 1811 Arnold Road in Jefferson, Md.

April 11-13: Chesapeake Conference’s single adults are invited to attend a spring retreat at the Mount Aetna Retreat Center in Hagerstown, Md. Come hear keynote speaker Lorraine Edwards’ inspiring presentations and make some new friends in a peaceful, woodland setting. For more information or to register, visit asamchesapeake.com, or contact Fred Thomas by email at fthomas1950@yahoo.com, or by phone at (410) 992-9731.

April 13: Washington Adventist University hosts its first Missions 5K Fun Run. Your donations and participation will support students that have committed to volunteer and for relief efforts throughout the year. To sponsor a group or runner, see the donation form on the Alumni Weekend page at http://www.wau.edu/alumni-weekend-sponsorship. Single-runner entry is $35. Same day sign-up will be available. For details, contact missions@wau.edu.

April 13: WAU along with WGTS 91.9 FM are hosting their annual Family Fun Festival featuring food from local restaurants, live music from recording artist Josh Wilson, children’s entertainment and local businesses. WAU’s Family Fun Festival is a locally established tradition, and has provided wholesome entertainment to the community for over a decade. The festival will take place on Sunday, 12 to 5 p.m. For more information, visit wgts.org/familyfunfest/.

April 26: The Dupont Park Church Home and School Association is sponsoring a black tie gala. The gala will be held at the Camelot banquet facilities in Upper Marlboro, MD. The theme for the evening is “An Evening in Paris” and will be hosted by Christian Comedian Jonathan Slocumb. Former students, faculty, parents, members and supporters of Christian education are invited. For more information about tickets and advertising in the souvenir journal, visit dupontgala.eventbrite.com.

PENNSYLVANIA
April 14: Pine Forge Academy is holding an open house for students in grades 7 to 11. Overnight accommodations are available for Sunday, April 13 but space is limited. A registration form is available at pineforgeacademy.org.

VIRGINIA

April 12: Around 30 Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Northern Virginia area are hosting an all-day worship and training event. It will be held at the Hylton Memorial chapel in Woodbridge, Va. The worship hour speaker is Chaplin Barry Black, followed by an afternoon of training seminars. WGTS 91.9FM will be offering a free gospel concert that night at 6:30 pm. For more information, visit novaoneevent.com.

VIRTUAL

February 17-April 14: Oakwood University is competing again in the “Retool Your School” Contest. With the support of Adventists worldwide, the university won a $50,000 prize that allowed them to construct an outdoor pavilion. Once again, Oakwood is the only Adventist institution in this competition. You can help Oakwood to win again by visiting https://www.retoolyourschool.com/vote-now/ and voting daily and on every computer and device you own. You can vote more than once as long as it is on a different computer and device.
Potomac Members Help Spanish-Speaking Students Earn GEDs

April 1, 2014 · by Taashi Rowe · in Education, Potomac Conference, This Month's Issue, Uncategorized

Story by Taashi Rowe

When a teacher asks a student to stay after class, it’s not generally good news. But for Claudia Pretel, who teaches a GED class for Spanish speakers, this was her chance for ministry. After class, the gentleman was apologetic and expected to be reprimanded as he had not been paying attention in class and had not done well on the homework. Instead, Pretel told him she was worried about him and asked if she could pray with him.

“He started crying,” she recalled. “He told me that his wife was dying. I asked him if I could hug him. The Holy Spirit gave me the words to talk to him. I told him that God loves him and his wife. I prayed for him, gave him a verse for the Bible and told him to buy his wife flowers and tell her that he loves her.”

The man said he had been in the United States for 18 years and no one had ever spoken to him the way that Pretel had. At the next class, the gentleman was smiling. He had good news. The doctor told them that his wife would be fine. She had improved so much that she was even able to join him at his graduation ceremony.

These are just some of the stories that Pretel hears every day while she carries out this ministry that God has laid on her heart. Pretel, whose husband Olives Villamizar pastors Potomac Conference’s Bristow, Culpepper and Bealeton Spanish churches in Northern Virginia, has gotten her entire family involved in this ministry. Pretel, who was a teacher in her native Colombia, along with members of her husband’s churches started their first GED or high school diploma equivalency program in 2012. They knew that education was one way they could help Spanish-speaking immigrants get better jobs.

“I now have former students doing their college degrees or technical studies,” Pretel says proudly. “I also have two starting their own companies but most see increases in their salaries because they now have their diplomas and can have a little bit of a better life.”

But Pretel and the other volunteers do more than give students the skills that will serve them in the workplace. They see teaching the classes as an opportunity to share...
Christ with their students, some 80 percent of whom are Roman Catholic. “When someone is in need, my husband and I will go look for them, pray with them, give them Bible studies. We believe this is a good way to open the doors to our [Seventh-day Adventist] community and share the gospel just like Jesus did. We hope that our students will become interested in following Him.”

The group now has classes at churches in Manassas, Charlottesville and Culpeper in Virginia as well as a class in Hyattsville, Md., and they are mostly self-funded with some help from her husband’s churches and from a negligible fee charged to students. Pretel works with about 10 volunteers and they carpool to the different locations to teach classes most nights of the week. Her daughter, Suranny who is a registered nurse, teaches the science classes. Yair Zapata, a member of the Culpeper church who holds a bachelor’s degree in engineering, teaches the math classes. They start the class with devotional, songs of praise and prayer.

“The program opens doors for students to have their GEDs,” Zapata says. “With the help of the Lord we are are trying to help as many people as possible.”

Some 58 students recently graduated from the program. The group is now in the process of registering new students.

This year’s program will be a bit more of a challenge as the GED tests will now be taken on computers. Pretel is seeking donations for computers, and says that since she has already seen many miracles in this ministry, she is confident God will come through with the needed computers. For more information on how you can help, contact Pretel at Claudiapretellp@gmail.com.

Clique acqui para lea mas en ingles.
Miembros de Potomac ayudan a alumnos hispanohablantes para que obtengan el GED.

Yair Zapata, Lucía Arévalo y Claudia Pretel enseñan clases de GED a hispanohablantes en el norte de Virginia.

Historia de Taashi Rowe

Por lo general, no es bueno cuando un profesor le pide a un alumno que se quede después de finalizar la clase. Pero para Claudia Pretel, que enseña clases de GED para hispanohablantes, es una oportunidad para ministrar. Al finalizar una de las clases, un hombre le pidió disculpas y esperó un llamado de atención por no haber prestado atención durante la clase y porque no había hecho bien la tarea. En lugar de reprenderlo, Pretel le dijo que estaba preocupada por él y le preguntó si podían orar juntos.

“Comenzó a llorar”, recuerda Pretel. “Me dijo que su esposa se estaba muriendo. Le pedí permiso para abrazarlo. El Espíritu Santo me dio las palabras para poder hablar con él y le dije que Dios los ama a él y a su esposa. Luego oré por él, compartí un versículo bíblico y le dije que comprara flores para su esposa y le dijera que la amaba”.

El hombre le contó que había estado en los Estados Unidos durante 18 años y nadie había hablado con él de la manera en la que Pretel lo había hecho. En la siguiente clase, el hombre tenía una sonrisa. Traía buenas noticias. El médico les había dicho que su esposa estaría bien. Había mejorado tanto que lo podría acompañar en la ceremonia de graduación.

Estas son algunas de las historias que Pretel escucha a diario mientras lleva a cabo el ministerio que Dios puso en su corazón. Pretel involucró a toda su familia en este ministerio. Su esposo, Olives Villamizar, es pastor de las iglesias hispanas de Bristow, Culpepper y Bealeton de Potomac Conference, al norte de Virginia. Como era docente en su Colombia natal, junto a miembros de las iglesias de su esposo comenzó en 2012 el primer programa de GED, o programa para obtener el diploma de equivalencia de educación secundaria. Sabían que la educación era una de las formas de ayudar a los inmigrantes hispanos para que consigan mejores trabajos.

“Ahora tengo exalumnos que están estudiando carreras universitarias o técnicas”, dice Pretel con orgullo. “También tengo dos alumnos que están comenzando su propio negocio; pero la mayoría percibe un aumento en los salarios porque ahora tienen un diploma que les permite disfrutar algo de una vida mejor”.

No obstante, Pretel y los otros voluntarios hacen mucho más que desarrollar en los alumnos las habilidades que les servirán para el trabajo. Ven las clases como una oportunidad para compartir a Cristo con sus alumnos, de los cuales cerca del 80% son católicos. “Cuando alguien tiene una necesidad, mi esposo y yo los buscamos, oramos y les damos estudios bíblicos. Creemos que esta es una buena manera de abrir las puertas de nuestra comunidad [Adventista del Séptimo Día] y de compartir el evangelio de la manera en la que Jesús lo hizo. Deseamos que nuestros alumnos se interesen en seguirlo”.

En la actualidad, el grupo tiene clases en las iglesias de Manassas, Charlottesville y Culpepper en Virginia y también
una clase en Hyattsville, Md. La mayoría de los grupos se autoabastece con la ayuda de las iglesias de su esposo y con la cuota mínima que pagan los alumnos. Pretel trabaja con alrededor de 10 voluntarios que comparten los gastos del viaje a las diferentes localidades donde enseñan casi todas las noches de la semana. Su hija Suranny, enfermera certificada, enseña las clases de ciencia. Yair Zapata, miembro de la iglesia de Culpepper, posee un título en ingeniería y enseña las clases de matemáticas. Las clases comienzan con devocionales, cantos de alabanza, y una oración.

“El programa abre sus puertas para que los estudiantes puedan acceder al GED”, afirma Zapata. “Con la ayuda del Señor, intentamos ayudar a la mayor cantidad de personas posible”.

Recientemente, alrededor de 58 alumnos se graduaron del programa. En la actualidad, el programa está en el proceso de inscribir a nuevos alumnos. Este año el programa tendrá un nuevo desafío, ya que el examen GED se realizará en computadora. En este momento, Pretel está buscando donaciones de computadoras y, como ya ha visto muchos milagros en este minsterio, confía en que Dios va a satisfacer esta necesidad. Para saber cómo puedes ayudar, contáctate con Claudia Pretel al correo claudiapretellp@gmail.com.

Read this article in English.
Allegheny West Teachers Learn Benefits of Robotics Program

April 2, 2014 · by Taashi Rowe · in Allegheny West Conference, Education, Uncategorized

Story by Tamaria L. Kulemeka

Allegheny West Conference (AWC) teachers did more than mull over educational theory at their recent in-service session. As a matter of fact, for most of the day, teachers tinkered, measured, programmed, tested and received a crash course in robotics.

Led by Robert Henley (pictured), communication director for the Southeastern Conference, the session revealed how the educators can harvest such robotics technology and improve the atmosphere at their conference schools: Columbus Adventist Academy in Columbus, Ohio, and Ramah Junior Academy in Cleveland.

“We can transform schools into STEM academies,” said Henley, referring to the country’s push to drastically improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education so that the abundance of jobs in those fields will not go unfilled. “You can become academic powerhouses. You can change the branding of your schools just by doing this,” added Henley, who leads the robotics program at Forest Lake Education Center (Fla.) and hosts a 10-day robotics camp each summer.

Henley emphasized how implementing such a program can boost the morale of students who may struggle with behavioral issues or lack of focus. “We teach the way we’ve been taught, but we need to see each student’s talents and gifts,” Henley said. “Let them see they are smart in something.”

Henley also brought along his youngest son, 9-year-old Brenden, who articulated how the program has benefitted him. The boy also assisted Henley in showing the AWC teachers how robotics work and encouraging them as they delved into uncharted territory.

Yvette Cooper, superintendent of schools, shares, “It excites me because the problem-solving math strategies that we have been emphasizing this year will be reinforced and implemented in real-life applications through this robotics initiative.”
Brenden, Robert Henley’s son shared how participating in a robotics program benefited him.
Grace Outlet Members Stage an “Extreme Makeover” Party

columbiaunionvisitor.com/grace-outlet-members-stage-an-extreme-makeover-party/

April 2, 2014 · by Taashi Rowe · in Pennsylvania Conference, Uncategorized

Instead of their typical social activities Grace Outlet’s party planning team ‘partied’ by helping a family in need.

Story by Amy Newman

When a church social team gets together to plan the year’s activities, typical ideas include game night, a picnic at the local park, a skating party, or a banquet—all fun ideas. But the party planning team for Pennsylvania Conference’s Grace Outlet church in Reading recently had a different idea.

Meggan Shobe, a party planner, recently came to her teammates with a heartache. Her best friend was in the middle of turmoil, in more ways than one, and needed a home for herself and her three children. Fortunately, Shobe knew of a place available. Unfortunately, the place was in rough shape: walls needed painting, floors needed replacing and the bathrooms and kitchen needed full repair.

Without hesitation, the Grace Outlet team decided that they would do an “Extreme Makeover: Grace Outlet Edition” for their February social event. Families were invited to come out and clean, paint, donate, spackle, hammer and do whatever they felt impressed to do for this family in need.

About 20 people showed up! It was a team effort, all for Jesus! The team varied over a five-hour period. But one common goal prevailed “connecting the disconnected” as a way of fulfilling their motto. Shobe’s friend came to help clean for a period of time. She was so grateful for the sacrifice and time people gave to her family who did not even know her. She could not believe how kind, how caring, how unselfish these strangers were.

This church social didn’t feature music or a table of food. “But there definitely was a party going on,” one team member shared. “Jesus was right at the center. If our team could have seen Him, I’m sure Jesus would have had a paintbrush in His hand and been drawing a great big heart on the wall. You see, Jesus is about people. He is about relationships. He is about reaching people in all different ways because He loves us and wants us home. And so, whatever the idea, whatever outside the box thought comes next, Grace Outlet continues to ‘Connect the Disconnected’ and hopes that you will desire to do that, too.”
5 Questions for Emanuel Pelote

Emanuel Pelote, the owner of Intelligent Design Systems, a technology consulting company that creates databases and web applications, lives in Washington, D.C., and attends Allegheny East Conference's (AEC) Fourth Street Friendship church. Since taking up the mantel as president of the Columbia Union Chapter of Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (CUASI) last year, he’s been working with his board of business owners and ministry makers to find ways to increase membership. In an email interview, we sought to learn more about him and his passion for ministry:

Q: You run a technology company. Why are you pursuing a degree in pastoral ministry? A: I truly enjoy serving our clients through finding creative solutions to their business issues. But I have to tell you, that what really drives me, what gets me out of bed every day is this God-given passion to express God’s goodness to my family and to a world that is hurting for lack of His presence in their lives. I read a book recently called Follow Me by David Platt, where he makes the important point that knowing, loving and serving God is not a part of a Christian’s life; it is the entire heart, soul and foundation of a Christian’s life.

So when it comes to any profession or any business, especially in technology, we know that whatever we create will disappear in a short time and be replaced by something else. But when my business and my life are grounded in the mission of building the kingdom of Christ, the product of all of that effort will have lasting, eternal results. 1 Peter 2:9 is a clear calling to every man, woman, boy, girl, and, of course business owner, that we have been chosen to proclaim God’s praises out of gratitude for what He has done for us. So my business is just an expression of the calling God has given me as a believer.

Q: Why do you believe members are the key to changing the world for Christ?

A: I really love what Paul says in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, when he talks about the body of Christ working together. As Adventists, we understand the value of official church institutional structures. Yet a head in a body is of no use without the hands, the feet, the eyes and ears all working in harmony together. The Holy Spirit is speaking to each one of us, whether we are in church leadership or not, to work together to reveal His love to so many in this world that are lost without Him.

There are true tragedies and darkness around the world, and people have a right to wonder “Where is God?” God’s answer is us. The church institution was never designed to reach the world without us. There will never be enough pastors or money in the budget to do that. But through us—the members—God will bless our homes, businesses and careers abundantly enough that He can use them collectively to call many of the lost to come into a saving relationship with Him. We are the key, because it’s God’s plan that the world would find Him through us.
Q: How are you working to grow the CUASI chapter?

A: We're focused on our mission, which, in a nutshell, is to encourage, empower and equip Adventists for ministry. For every Adventist who has ever felt that God had some kind of purpose for them, we’re growing a ministry here in Columbia Union that will encourage them in that endeavor. For example, I’ve spoken with physicians who felt sure that it was God who called them and got them through medical school, but later on felt themselves consumed with the business of medicine, and had lost their sense of mission in their work. We’ve been able to connect them with other physicians who are actively winning souls through their practices, to help them re-capture that flame. We also empower members by opening up opportunities for them to strategically collaborate with congregations across the union.

One of many examples I could give is Ed and Carol Williams’ Former Adventist Recovery Ministry, which focuses on reclaiming former members and provides an excellent example of that collaboration as the Chesapeake Conference has wholeheartedly embraced and supported their efforts. CUASI is engaged in equipping members through training, such as the evangelistic training we provide through the New Beginnings evangelistic series, and through our conferences. We also offer training to any congregation who would like to learn how to share the gospel as individuals, and the response has been fantastic. Our annual convention is designed to provide all three of these things for our attendees.

Q: Why do you hope members across our union will attend this year’s convention, April 17-19 in Bethesda, Md.?

A: Have you ever noticed that so many people just assume that the passion in their faith has to die down and grow a little colder the longer they remain in the church? Or that our life as Adventists isn’t supposed to continue to be life changing after the first couple years? A fellow ASI member just today quoted Proverbs 11:25 to me which says that “he who waters will be watered himself” (NIV). We want the Adventists of the Columbia Union to be truly alive for Christ, and we know that the way to do that is to answer His calling on our lives. That’s really why our theme this year is “Answering the Call.” When we come together and work together across cultures, conferences and congregations to answer His call, then He will breathe new life and power into His people.

Here’s a glance at our schedule:

Thursday – We will visit the General Conference, Ellen White Estate and have lunch at the GC Cafeteria. The convention opens Thursday evening with Ohio Conference’s Karl Haffner, one of my favorite pastors and authors.

Friday – We’ll offer 16 workshop sessions sharing tools for people who wish to answer God’s calling in their lives. There will be sessions on How to Start a Ministry, Natural Health practices, How to use the internet for ministry, Understanding the Adventist Blueprint for Ministry, Christian Leadership and others. Friday evening will feature a worship concert and a message from Pastor Gary Wimbish, a former law school dean in Baltimore, who now pastors Allegheny East’s Columbia Community Center in Columbia, Md.

Sabbath – Attendees will witness several examples of how God is literally doing miracles today through Adventists who are simply willing to answer the call on their lives. We’re very grateful that Dave Weigley, our Columbia Union President, was willing to actually re-arrange his schedule to join us and share the word of God for divine worship. On Sabbath afternoon, Robert Folkenberg, the former General Conference president, will lead a powerful Share Him presentation. Share Him is responsible for literally thousands of conversions to Christ every year, and transformed Adventist lives as well, because they gently guide you to the point where you are ready to win souls for Christ even if you’ve never done anything like it before! We will also collect an offering to support creative lay-ministry throughout our union. To register, including meals and overnight accommodations, just visit www.cuasi.org, and click on the convention link which will lead you to the online registration pages at AdventSource. Meals and hotel can be reserved through the registration page. The Sabbath service is open to all, so for those who are planning to drive in only for Sabbath, there is also an option to purchase meal tickets for the on-site, full-service buffet.
Q: What is the message of Isaiah 6:8, and what does it mean to you?

A: Isaiah 6:8 says, “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me” (NKJV). That verse serves as the foundation for this year’s convention, and this passage says so much about what God is doing in His church. Isaiah had a vision of the majesty of God, and wanted to join in, but like many of us, he felt unworthy, unskilled, unable. But that’s when he was touched with a coal from the altar which had been covered by the blood of the Lamb, he was given strength to serve God. That’s my prayer for myself and for everyone who comes to this convention, that we will see God clearly, be touched by Him, and receive power and willingness to answer God’s call to them saying “Here am I! Send me.”
Columbia Woman Elected Mid-Atlantic Adventist Church Vice President

Baltimore News
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by AFRO Staff

Celeste Ryan Blyden, elected Mid-Atlantic Adventist Church Vice President. (Courtesy Photo)

Columbia resident Celeste Ryan Blyden was promoted to vice president for strategic communication and public relations at the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists recently.

Blyden previously served as assistant to the president of the union, the church’s Mid-Atlantic headquarters, also located in Columbia.

“We appreciate the contributions you have made to the mission of the church here in the Columbia Union. We applaud your dedication and service,” said Dave Weigley, union president, following the unanimous board vote of Blyden’s appointment.

“It was one of those decisions where you could catch and feel the electricity in the room. It was time to do this. This is the right thing to do. It is the first time, to my knowledge, that the Columbia Union has had a woman vice president,” he said as the room exploded with a standing ovation.

In addition to her new duties, she will continue to lead the communication department and serve as publisher of the union’s monthly news magazine, the Visitor. During her tenure, Blyden and her team grew the Visitor brand to include a weekly email newsletter, videos, websites, the popular annual calendar, social media and other platforms.

Blyden has a Bachelor of Science in Communication and Counseling Psychology from Washington Adventist University and a Master of Arts in Organizational Communication from Bowie State University.

She lives in Columbia with her husband, Austin, and two daughters.

Most Popular Stories in Baltimore News
Washington Adventist University to begin building ballfield

$1.8M turf field will be open to the public

by Aline Barros Staff writer

Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, is moving forward with its new $1.8 million ballfield.

The county recently approved the project and construction should begin Sunday. It is expected to be completed this summer.

The field will have artificial turf to provide a safe space to accommodate soccer games, intramural sports and a variety of activities by students, staff and community members throughout the year, according to a university news release.

“The space is being provided primarily for Athletics; however, we plan on using this space as part of our community outreach,” Angie Crews, interim director at the university’s office of corporate communication, wrote in an email to the Gazette.

These improvements are part of Washington Adventist University’s Vision 2020, with a goal to better serve its students, faculty and staff.

The university also has been renovating the campus in the past five years with a series of improvements, including a new $6.3 million music building, a $1.2 million dining hall renovation and a $1.1 million activity center.

Other projects include new sidewalks, new furniture for the men’s and women’s dormitories, and new flooring and classroom furniture.

The university was established in 1904. Today, the institution at 7600 Flower Ave. offers undergraduate, graduate and distance learning classes.

More information is at wau.edu.

abarros@gazette.net
Highland Adventist students learn survival skills

The Inter-Mountain

Students from Highland Adventist School braved a late spring snow storm to travel into the forest to learn about survival.

The school's annual survival campout, which focuses on teaching students various tasks such as creating shelters from natural materials and building a fire with tools other than matches, was canceled due to a storm front. However, as soon as the snow slowed down, an adventurous group of students and staff headed into the forest for a day trip to practice their survival skills.

"Everything was soggy, but we got a fire going and cooked our supper. We also made good progress on building an emergency shelter using materials we found in the forest," said Cheryl Jacko, principal. "We hope our students are never in a perilous situation, but it is gratifying to know they have some knowledge to help them in an emergency."

Outdoor Skills training is a regular part of the curriculum of Highland Adventist School. For more information, contact the school at www.highlandadventistschool.org or call 304-636-4274.