



Cross Connection

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Service Center Tours 2008

By Thelma Jones
Editor, Cross Connection Newspaper

The Office of Insurance and Pensions conducted a "Benefits" tour throughout the Texas Annual Conference last year.

The primary focus and reason for the tour according to Rev. B. T. Williamson, Director of Clergy Excellence was to bring pastors and local congregations a myriad of information which would be used for future planning.

The tour was a successful one. This year's tour for clergy and laity has been expanded to include information about everything the Conference Service Center offers clergy and congregations. Everyone is invited to attend: pastors, lay leaders, council chairpersons, treasurers and members of pastor-parish relations, missions, finance and

social justice committee members.

"We want the local church to understand why the Conference Service Center is here - to meet the needs of the employees of the local church," says Lydia Lopez, Health and Pension

"We want the local church to understand why the Conference Center is here - to meet the needs of the employees of the local church."

Benefits Administrator. "We're becoming a better service oriented facility, one committed to Bishop Haic's vision of a vital service center."

Lopez understands what it takes to bring about that vision. "We're implementing new concepts and technology in order to become more efficient in providing quality service. On the other hand, we have to listen to those

to the people we represent," she said. Toward that end, the tours are an excellent tool to connect with lay and clergy in the local churches.

Service Center leaders and directors will offer workshops that highlight their respective ministries.

Dr. Charles Millikan, Vice President of Methodist Health Care System, along with

Dr. Bill Jones, Chair of the Board of Pensions, and others will share new information about what is being provided through the Group Health Benefits program.

Friendwood UMC, Memorial Drive UMC, First UMC Bryan, First UMC Longview, First UMC Nacogdoches and Trinity UMC

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Building on faith



Faith Tidwell sits in the window of her new home which she believes is God's answer to her prayer.

Read Faith's extraordinary story on page 5.

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U.M. Army is 'hands, feet, and mouth' for God

By Kirsten Pasha
Community Relations Officer, Methodist Children's Home

When John Hensley donned a military outfit and barked orders to a row of young adults, the rest of the army laughed. It was a skit during a late-night talk show after several long days of hard work and short nights of little sleep.

This was an army united as one - the United Methodist Army - and its base was a church in Lufkin, Texas.

During the month of July, United Methodist youth and sponsors gathered at First United Methodist Church to form a force of almost 140. According to Hensley, U.M. Army director,

the mission teams split up around the community and spent a total of \$21,000 on home repairs for approximately 70 homes. All this in 100-plus degree weather.

"The hard work and hot weather are small prices to pay to be in a place so awesome," Kori Smith, Methodist Children's Home resident, said. "Everyone really cares about the work and goes out of their way to care for the clients and make them feel wanted."

Clients in the Lufkin area were recommended to the U.M. Army with work requests for



Kori Smith, Methodist Children's Home resident paints a railing on a porch in Lufkin.

their homes, such as building wheelchair ramps or back porches and house painting.

After four days of work, the U.M. Army invited clients to join them for a worship service and time of testimony. One client spoke to the group, revealing her need for help and God's provision through the U.M. Army.

"From the deepest part of my heart, my soul, thank you," she said. "U.M. Army, you are doing God's work."

And although there were tear-filled thank yous - and even

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August is national children's health month

Obesity in children is on the rise. Currently, 9 million children in America ages 6 to 19 are overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). It is becoming increasingly important to decrease these figures and model healthy behavior to our children.

Healthy nutrition and regular exercise are beneficial for both weight loss and improving long term health. When it comes to nutrition and exercise for your children, the situation often becomes a little tricky and confusing.

The good thing is, what's good for you is also good for your child. Here are some guidelines to help you navigate health and wellness for your whole family.

Fruits and vegetables

Children and adults should eat between five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Most fruits and vegetables are low in fat and calories and they are full of essential vitamins and minerals.

Grains

Choose 100% whole grains, rather than refined white flour products. Whole grains contain fiber as well as essential vitamins and minerals.

The goal is to get three servings of grains per day. Try 1/2 cup of brown rice, oatmeal, or whole wheat pasta, 100% whole wheat bread or tortillas, or whole grain cereal such as Kashi.

Non-fat and low-fat dairy

Dairy products contain calcium, an important mineral for growing bones in children. Your child's calcium needs are based on age so younger kids need 2-3 servings of calcium rich foods per day and kids 9 to 18 should get 3-4 servings per day.

Choose non-fat or low-fat

yogurts and cheeses as well as dark, leafy, green vegetables.

Things to avoid

A diet high in sugar and fat can lead to weight gain and other complications. Limit items such as soda, chips, and other junk foods.



Exercise

Parents should get involved and increase the amount of physical activity their children get daily. Try playing sports together.

Talk to your children to find out what they like; making it fun and creative will make you more successful. Try to set goals and track progress, discourage sedentary time like playing video games and watching TV. Becoming physically active with your children will benefit the whole family for weight management and preventing heart disease, stroke, and diabetes later on in life.

The summer season is the perfect time to spend outdoors enjoying fun activities, summer-time fruits and vegetables, and encouraging children to be active and healthy.

Here are some tips to make sure your children have a safe and healthy summer:

1) Be sensible about sun exposure: A bad sunburn can keep your skin tender for days. It may even send you to the hos-

pital. Sun exposure, particularly large and irregular doses of it without sunscreen, is the No. 1 cause of skin cancer.

Make sure kids are wearing sunscreen and hats. This will protect you and your children from the sun's damaging rays.

2) Fill-up on healthy summer fruits to avoid candy and other sweets: Blend up some strawberries, peaches, mangoes, and bananas with low-fat frozen yogurt to make a smoothie. Freeze 100% fruit juice in ice cube trays for a cooling healthy and delicious snack. Cut up

some watermelon, honeydew, cantaloupe or other hydrating melons. Also, grapes are also a quick and easy healthy snack to keep around for children!

3) Watch out for high temperatures and humidity: Even grown-ups may get caught up in having summer fun so they ignore the signs of overexertion and heat related illness.

Whether you're working or playing outdoors, pay attention to thirst, rest often, and stop if you feel weak, dizzy or fatigued.

4) Bike and sports protection: Biking, skate boarding, roller skating and other sports on wheels put children at risk for a concussion or worse.

Make sure they are practicing safety techniques and skills like wearing a helmet and other protective gear. Teach your kids how to swim, supervise those who don't know how to swim, and review safety rules if you're boating or at a public pool.



Mark Trautmann, another Methodist Children's Home resident, blasts the paint off the back of a house. Workers on the other side of the house pecked paint to prepare it for a

song of thanks on the piano - Smith said that the workers benefited the most.

"The way the clients react and smile, it's good to know they feel God's presence just as much as we do," she said. "But honestly, the people who change the most are the people working. The clients get a lot out of this, but we really grow the most because we are blessed by serving."

For people like Hensley, who has been involved in U.M. Army for 14 years - two of which as director, being part of U.M. Army is a way to praise God.

Brian Heine, Methodist Children's Home resident, said

giving a testimony time that his passion for the Lord drives him, and he plans on being committed to working, funding and being part of U.M. Army on into the future.

And as long as U.M. Army has dedicated workers, there's plenty of opportunity for God to be glorified through their work. One client summed up her experience as a blessing:

"They were instruments of God. God showed his love and mercy through them. They were the hands and feet and mouths for the Lord Jesus."

Service Center Tours

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Thursday, August 31, 2006

Listed below is the schedule for the tours.



Tuesday, August 26 - 1

1 a.m.
Friendwood UMC
204 W. Edgewood Dr.
Friendwood, Texas 77546

Sunday, August 27 - 4:30

p.m.
Memorial Drive UMC
12955 Memorial Dr.
Houston, Texas 77079

Monday, August 28 - 7 p.m.

First UMC Bryan
506 E. 28th Street
Bryan, Texas 77802

Tuesday, August 29, 7 p.m.

First UMC Longview
400 N. Fredonia
Longview, Texas 75601

Wednesday, August 30 - 7

p.m.

First UMC Nacogdoches
201 E. Hospital
Nacogdoches, Texas 75961

Thursday, August 31 - 7

You won't want to miss this!
The Houston Chapter of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) will host the Southcentral Jurisdiction-BMCR in Houston, September 28-30, 2006.

Several Houston churches will serve as meeting sites for workshops and/or tours.

Registration deadline is **September 7, 2006**. For additional information, a registration brochure or to volunteer, contact either of the following persons:

Juanita Jackson 713-523-6392
jjackson3014@sbcglobal.net

Frances Dunlap 281-999-5114
frances.dunlap@msn.com

Mission team visit Kenya bush clinic a glimpse into the heart of Christ

By Kathie Mann
Director, Partners in Mission

Planning began in January to take the staff of the Main Methodist Hospital of Kenya and United Methodist Volunteers in

of faces passed by our windows; hundreds of little envelopes filled with pills were eagerly accepted. The people we served



Villagers in Kinna walk miles to get to hospital clinic.

Missions (UMVM) members from the Texas Annual Conference on a two-day bush clinic to the northern frontier.

Permission was needed to travel into this Muslim area which meant that several members of the team had to meet with the village elders, the District Medical officer, and the Muslim leadership. After we received permission to travel, schedules at the hospital had to be adjusted so the staff doctors, nurses and interpreters could take off. The hospital and the community helped by collecting huge amounts of food, clothing and medicines for the people of Kinna and Garba Tula.

Early on a June morning, the team loaded the bus and headed down the dusty, hot dirt road to

away.

Packing up Monday evening, the team left for Garba Tula to sleep in an old Catholic convent. Setting up again on Tuesday morning, the team was ready to begin the second day clinic. People in traditional clothing, ladies with their faces veiled, babies swaddled tightly on their mother's backs and blind elderly people led by their grandchildren, were glimpses of the drama passing by our doors.

We heard voices talking in 3-4 different dialects with concerns and problems we could only imagine.

In two days the team had seen 1,500 patients! We dispensed hundreds of pills. The top needs were malaria, cataracts, ear infections, tonsillitis, worms, dental needs and general infections.



Muslim woman waits her turn to see the doctor.

were 99.9% Muslim nomads and herders.

Many patients who needed cataract surgery were referred to the hospital for free treatment. Others such as OB/GYN and pediatric concerns were given referrals for more tests.

Many others had gone to Isiolo hospital located in another region to receive medical care, waited for days without seeing a doctor. In despair they returned to the village to this free clinic and received the help they need ed.

As the bus pulled out, we sang praise songs to let the village know that we were thankful for the opportunity to serve them and that our God was an "Awesome God." Muslims and Christians working together for the health of a community! It can be done with proper planning, prayer and patience.

They lived in temporary mud and grass huts. Having just survived a horrible drought and a late rainy season, the people waited patiently because the next clinic was a six hour walk

CLT takes 1st steps toward transformation

By Rev. Rick Goodrich
Assistant to the Bishop and Director of the Center for Missional Excellence

Since receiving its charge from the voting body of the Texas Annual Conference to carry on the business of the conference between sessions, the Core Leadership Team has been busy.

The first meeting of the Texas Annual Conference Core Leadership Team (CLT) was held earlier this summer, with Bishop Justice Riggie Haic chairing the meeting.

Membership of the CLT includes the Bishop as chair, one representative from each of the nine districts, one representative from the Cabinet, and three at large members. In addition, the team includes five ex-officio members with voice, but not vote; those members are the four center directors and the communications director.

The Bishop opened with reflections on transformation – highlighting 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, and focusing on the verse that reads: "And all of us are being transformed from one degree of glory to another."

The CLT and the conference are called to be transformed in order to transform the world.

"Let us shift from people who are faithful – and that's good – to include with that, faithful and fruitful," said Bishop Haic, noting that the world transformation only appears three times in the New Testament – in Philippians, Romans and 2 Corinthians.

"All those references call us to be more like Jesus, to love more like Jesus, to embody the kingdom of God more like Jesus. Our best human effort and God's grace joined together – that's where transformation happens."

Following devotion, the Bishop led a discussion of her expectations of the CLT and the CLT members also shared their expectations, which included:

- Allow the Holy Spirit to lead.
- Collaboration of the CLT, center directors, district superintendents and the districts.
- Equip people and congregations to do the work of kingdom building

- Allow oneself to be stretched and be inventive.
- Be Christ centered, future focused, forward leaning, and

faith driven.

The major item of discussion was the work of the Center for Congregational Development, which Dr. Karen Dorris leads.

Dorris discussed the plans for a pilot program for transformation in nine churches in 2006 (one church from each district) and in 225 churches in the conference during the next three years. The Core Leadership Teams approved the negotiation of a contract with a consulting firm for the next four years to work with and train the clergy and laity in the selected churches.

"You can take the strategies these trainers will share into any church, use them and achieve results," Dorris said.

To further define the role of the Centers of Excellence, Dorris and the Rev. B. T. Williamson, the Director for the Center for Clergy Excellence, will host "listening posts" in each district this fall to hear what the clergy and the laity want from their centers.

Conference Treasurer Dr. Elijah Stansell Jr., reported that representatives of all four centers will visit the districts August 26-31 to share information about the work of each center and how each center relates to the districts, the clergy, the laity and the churches.

The Core Leadership Team discussed three items which were placed on its agenda by the action of the 2006 Annual Conference: 1) the Conference nominations process, 2) the criteria for accountability and the Conference assessment process, and 3) the process by which the Annual Conference will handle resolutions.

Rev. Rick Goodrich, Assistant to the Bishop and Director of the Center for Missional Excellence, proposed three task forces addressing nominations, accountability and resolutions to the Annual Conference. The task forces will present recommendations to the CLT and where appropriate to the 2007 Annual Conference.

Goodrich reported on the new Annual Conference Planning Team, which has begun

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UMVM members packing donated supplies for two day trip.

Kinna. Creating an instant mini hospital in the District medical office building, each doctor had their area ready to receive patients very quickly. Hundreds

Building on faith

By Dr. Chris Volz
Senior Pastor First United Methodist Church Freeport
and Thelma Jones
Editor, Cross Connection

Nothing can compare to a child's simple faith in God's ability to answer prayers. That kind of faith can indeed move mountains.

Thirteen year old Faith Tidwell was aptly named by her parents. She and her family attend First United Methodist Church in Freeport, Texas. One year ago Faith put in a prayer request for her family to have a home of their own. Four months later, her prayer was answered.

Faith's new home was built by Habitat for Humanity of Southern Brazoria County, a non-profit Christian housing ministry. Families receive no-interest loans for homes, but most are put in 400 hours of

"sweat-equity" on other Habitat projects to be eligible to own their own home.

The home was completed in May and Dr. Chris Volz, senior pastor of FUMC Freeport performed the dedication ceremony. Faith recently completed her confirmation class where she wrote a chant that she shared during the ceremony. The house was dedicated to the memory of a deceased member of the church, Mr. A. O. Evans. Evans' daughter, Kay Evans Millap donated \$21,000 for the materials used in building the house.

Over the years, members of FUMC Freeport have been

staunch supporters of Habitat for Humanity, donating property and providing many hours of community service as volunteers.

"She (Faith) sees her new home as an answer to her prayer request," says Volz. "It is great to see how God answers our prayers. Faith's faith is contagious."

This is the kind of faith-forming relationship that each of us should have with God—the confidence to take our prayers and concerns to Him and know that He will answer. We can learn from this child's example of faith and trust in God.



Faith and Pastor Volz pose during the dedication ceremony of her new home.

School of Christian Mission event has a new slant youth and children participation

By Mary Brown
Texas Conference United Methodist Women
Communications Coordinator

The 2006 Cooperative School of Christian Mission came to a close Sunday, July 16, with the nearly 300 participants leaving inspired, informed, and ready to share their knowledge in their local churches.

In addition to the adult participants, the school attracted 25 children and eight youth, who

patients in Palestine.

Rev. Marvin Hood, associate pastor of Faithbridge UMC in Spring, led the camp in the Spiritual Growth Study on Peace in the Bible in Our Time. Vivian Oliver (Texas Conference), Monina Fowler, and Sarla Chand taught the sec-



Youth show off blankets made for hospital patients in

the children while Mattie Ordaz and Theresa Graham led the youth in the many activities.

Thelma Worden served as dean of the school, and Rev. Donna Brown was assistant dean.

In addition, boards and agencies of the conference shared in enrichment groups. A Trip to Zimbabwe was shared by Dr. Carolyn McCall; Dancing With a Brave Spirit was led by Dr. Glenna Brayton; Angela Baker reported on the Hurricane Rita Disaster Response. Building Peace One Piece at a Time was led by Elaine Kinsey, while Rev. Richard Laster helped participants in Organize for Mission. Rev. Clint Rabb, General Board of Global Ministries representative, assist-

ed Laster. Understanding the Texas Political Maze was Judy McFarland's topic, while Rev. Ruby Nelson shared What the Lady Needs to Know about Clergy Sexual Ethics.

Those who attended enjoyed a visit to the Conference Mission Store; an ice cream social, walks around the lake and on the prayer path; visiting the displays of programs and events in the Texas Conference; opportunities to purchase study books, and meals with old and new friends. Picture from this year's school are available on the school's website at www.cooperativeschool.org.

The Texas Conference Cooperative School of Christian Mission is an event planned by the Conference Board of

Managers and United Methodist Women. Questions can be directed to Dr. Danny Wayman, Chair of the Board of Managers or Rev. Donna Brown, Dean of the 2007 school. E-mail may be sent to cooperativeschool@hotmail.com.



Children enjoying games and mission projects at School of Christian Mission.

learned about peace, India and Pakistan, and how globalization has changed our lives. The young people sang during the Sunday morning worship service and engaged in hands-on mission projects. The children and youth made blankets for hospital

and year course on India and Pakistan.

Globalization classes were taught by Texas Conference experts: Dr. Danny Wayman, Dr. J.D. Phillips, and Dr. Francis Guidry. Rev. Amy Hodge and Carolyn Brentley worked with

CLT takes 1st steps toward transformation

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to work in planning the 2007 Annual Conference to be held at the Woodlands UMC.

The Core Leadership team has a busy year ahead of it in order to implement the new Model for Ministry of the Texas Annual Conference and to ensure that the Texas Annual Conference continues to be "Bound for Greater Things."

Eleanor L. Colvin, Director of Communications, contributed to this report.