



Photos by Carolyn Webster

Nurtured in nature

Junior-high students make trek into canyon's wilderness for camp's 60th year (page 4)

Above, several campers team up to position a tarp over a frame to make a tent during Wilderness Camp, June 18-24, in the backwoods of Canyon Camp near Hinton. Right, a young camper concentrates on cooking pancakes over a fire pit. Youths must start a fire and prepare their own breakfasts and suppers.



Fundraising event sponsored by Conference Council on Youth Ministry to support
YOUTH SERVICE FUND!

St. Yootz Day

AUGUST 15

Concert featuring
Christian hip-hop recording artist
TobyMac

Frontier City amusement park, Oklahoma City
Ticket includes park admission and concert
Order online: www.okumc.org/youth

What good could you do with \$500?

By **BILL SHERMAN**
Tulsa World

What would you do if someone handed you \$500 and said go do something good with it?

That question was posed to two dozen young people at Tulsa's Christ United Methodist Church this spring.

And then an anonymous couple gave each of them \$500 to make good on their ideas.

"What Would You(th) Do?" is now in full swing.

One student bought an air conditioner for an elderly neighbor; one is buying gift baskets for foster children; another is building a place to store crafts at Catholic Charities and planning a craft day for children.

One young man even traveled to Vietnam to personally make a donation to the orphanage where his father was raised.

Samuel Bennett, 14, is using the money to prepare and deliver

hot breakfasts to homeless people downtown once a month during the summer.

"It was just heartwarming, to do good without getting anything in return. It was really a good feeling," he said. "I felt like God was calling me to do this. I just wanted to help people. That's my goal in life."

Madison Erickson put on a carnival July 8 at Kendall-Whittier Elementary School, complete with food, games, face-painting, a magic show, and arts and crafts.

"My goal is to let these kids have fun, and maybe get their minds off of things that are going on at home," the Union High School junior said. "I think it's going great. They're really having fun. They really like the face painting and the tattoos."

Two third-graders at the carnival agreed.

Tatiyana Brown, who attends

See *What good*, page 8



With \$500, youth members of Tulsa-Christ UMC entertain children by hosting a school carnival.

Save the date

1. **Aug. 31**
Healthy Clergy Retreat
at OKC-New Hope UMC
Sept. 1
Healthy Clergy Retreat at Tulsa-Faith UMC
Sponsored by Wellness Committee
www.okumc.org/benefits
2. **Sept. 19**
Dash & Bash 5K at Camp Egan
• Camp's 70th anniversary celebration
• Dedication of Holliman Medical Station and Playground
www.egancrc.org
3. **Sept. 22**
Bishop's Day Apart, for all clergy
at OKC-St. Luke's UMC
Speaker: Reggie McNeal, church futurist and author of "Kingdom Come."
Register by Aug. 28 to receive book in advance
www.okumc.org/bishopsdayapart

4. **Sept. 26**
Human Trafficking Symposium
A study of this issue's impact both internationally and in the crossroads of America
• Sponsored by the Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM), Board of Church & Society, and Discipleship Ministry Team
• At Oklahoma City University's Smith Chapel
www.okumc.org/youth



5. **Oct. 17**
Boys Ranch Rodeo and Soda Steve's 5K Root Beer Run
• Boys Ranch is a Circle of Care site
• Race benefits Oklahoma VIM
Start your day with breakfast and the race at Fin & Feather resort, Lake Tenkiller, then ride over to the noon rodeo at the ranch near Gore

Explore potential for Peru

On Sept. 19, your church group can meet Bishop Samuel Aguilar of the Methodist Church in Peru and missionary Dora Canales via a virtual mission encounter.

You are invited to be part of a mini-consultation with the two leaders, at 10 a.m. that Saturday in the new Kingswood Institute, which is located in OKC-Wesley United Methodist Church.

"We will hear what the bishop and Dora identify as some of the biggest hurdles facing the church in Peru; together, we will search for solutions along with our Latin American brothers and sisters based on dignity, justice, and mutual respect," said Karen Distefano, secretary of Global Ministries for the Oklahoma Conference.

Earlier this year, she attended a roundtable at which mission partners from around the world discussed ways to help the Peruvian church address its most urgent needs. Distefano said Oklahoma's greatest asset for the work is its people.

She is joined by Lori Foster, coordinator of Oklahoma Volunteers In Mission, in hosting the mini-consultation.

Attend in person at the Kingswood Institute — Wesley church is at Classen and Northwest 25th — or be a virtual participant through GoToMeeting.

Register with Distefano, kririe@aol.com, 918-440-9213.

2015 Bishop's Scholars announced



Each year, Oklahoma City University presents the Bishop's Scholar Award to three deserving students as a part of its effort to identify and support academically advanced United Methodist youths who are committed to careers in Christian service. We are very proud to announce here the Bishop's Scholars for 2015.

Jenny Johnson

Before her senior year in high school, Jenny Johnson knew she was called to youth ministry and she was destined for OCU. From her home in Arlington, Texas, Jenny had researched United Methodist-affiliated universities that offer a degree specializing in youth ministry. One was just up the road in Oklahoma City!

Before making that trek, however, she's immersed herself in nationally ranked choir and cheerleading programs at James Martin High School. Her peers and teachers recognized her leadership qualities.

She brought that same degree of commitment to her local church service. She has been active at First UMC, Fort Worth. Church member Ann McIntyre witnessed Jenny's caring spirit at a camp for children with special challenges.



Johnson

"Jenny was assigned a camper that had significant emotional, physical, and behavioral issues," McIntyre said. "It was a joy to observe her selflessly caring for this young camper. Jenny frequently missed meals and lost sleep in order to care for her camper."

Lauren Huntley

Lauren Huntley was clear about her primary goal during high school: to serve God any way possible. She lived out that mission through a number of activities.

At Latta High School she exercised leadership in a number of organizations, including Family Career and Community Leaders of



Huntley

America, Speech and Theatre, and the Academic Bowl team, and as editor of the yearbook. She excelled in the classroom and in relationships with people of diverse age groups.

Her passion for serving God and others found even greater expression in her local church, Ada-First UMC.

As head of the church's youth leadership team, she helped create volunteer positions for students, assisted in worship planning, and helped build an intergenerational community within the church. She served on a mission team in New Orleans and with Youth Force Duncan.

In recommending Lauren for



Wagner

this scholarship, Elisabeth Rogers wrote, "Whether she is using high energy to get the children in worship to sing and praise or involving a shy, reluctant teen into joining a discussion, Lauren has a wonderful, God-given ability to lead and involve other people." Rogers is Children's Ministry director at the church.

Peyton Wagner

Peyton Wagner already feels at home on OCU's campus. She's attended the OCU Stars Youth Service Day several times and visited friends enrolled at OCU.

She looks forward to joining students and faculty who share her

passion for youth ministry. She already knows some of them, from CYME and North/South OKC District camps, Youth Force, and the Conference Council on Youth Ministries.

Peyton also has been active in her home church, OKC-New Hope, working in Vacation Bible School and serving on the youth council.

At Deer Creek High School, she played basketball and soccer, edited the yearbook, and mentored freshmen.

Her love of children motivated her to serve as a daycare teacher, help at an Infant Crisis Center, and volunteer at a children's hospital. She originally planned to become an elementary school teacher, but acknowledging her call to ministry set her on a different path.

That call came at CYME camp last summer.

We encourage you to identify your church's youths who express interest and abilities in ministry. Help them apply to become a Bishop's Scholar and for other scholarships to OCU. Visit www.okcu.edu/campus/religious-life/umc-scholarships/index or contact Rita Himes, 405-208-5060, rhimes@okcu.edu.



Strength for the journey

Service enriches woman's spiritual growth

NOTE: Bishop Hayes invited three laity to be guest writers while he is on sabbatical.

By **CINDY HULL**

I have cherished the opportunity to serve the Oklahoma Conference United Methodist Women organization as Conference president for the past three years. Our theme this year is *F.R.O.G. = Fully Rely On God: Leaping into UMW's Future.*

Paul reminds us, "We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." (1 John 4:16 NRSV)

My journey as a UMW member began when I was 19 years old. Over the decades I've grown spiritually and learned so much about myself, the organization, the Church, and Jesus Christ's call upon my life.

Every Christian can find value in the three goals that form the *purpose* statement for United Methodist Women.

1. To know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ;

2. To develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and

3. To expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the Church.

These can be worthwhile pursuits for any individual, family, small group, or congregation. Oklahoma UMW members strive every day to fulfill our purpose.

Toward achieving those goals, the women pursue a more specific *vision*: "Turning faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world."

We live the vision by "providing

opportunities and resources to grow spiritually, become more deeply rooted in Christ, and put faith into action. We are organized for growth, with flexible structures leading to effective witness and action. We equip women and girls around the world to be leaders in communities, agencies, workplaces, governments, and churches. We work for justice through compassionate service and advocacy to change unfair policies and systems. We provide educational experiences that lead to personal change in order to transform the world." (United Methodist Women Handbook 2013-16)



Hull

Quadrennial event in OKC

Our work in 2016 will involve co-hosting a very special event in Oklahoma. Worship and Bible study will flow throughout the event; its theme is "A Fresh Wind Blowing."

"The wind blows where it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." (John 3:8).

Every four years, United Methodist Women and guests gather for Quadrennial Meetings in five regions of the country.

The South Central Jurisdiction UMW Quadrennial Meeting will be held April 15-17 in Oklahoma City.

The UMW members of the Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences are hosting this event.

Janet Wolf will be the Bible study leader, and Marcus Briggs Cloud will be musician and worship leader.

We anticipate an inspiring, educational time together. All are welcome!

Caring for our planet**Personal action at heart of new program**

The Environmental Coalition hopes to present its new educational program to a wide array of people — civic groups, other secular or faith organizations, even families, as well as United Methodists.

"Where in the World Are We — and You — on Changes in Weather, Climate, Nature?" coalition members ask. That's the program title.

It's also a question that can bring out strong emotions and certainly causes intense public debate. But the coalition is not arguing the science.

"We want to sidestep contention. We want to bring it down to a personal level," said Pat Hoerth. A UM deaconess, she is spiritual director at Turtle Rock Farm in northern Oklahoma.

People may feel confused, even powerless in the face of changes in the environment. But this program seeks "to help people feel hopeful about their part," Hoerth said. "What we do matters."

The team wants "to help people take their next step" in caring about our planet, she said.

Three presenters are prepped to guide the one-hour program. They are Hoerth; Nathaniel

Batchelder of The Peace House, Oklahoma City; and lawyer Jane Wheeler, a member of OKC-Mosaic UMC.

The Environmental Coalition is a subgroup of the Conference's Board of Church & Society.

The new program "is an interactive approach to facing, expressing, and acting on our love for our planet home, our concern for the changes happening, and our desire to do things that will make a difference," a flier stated.

Commit to one action, Batchelder said. "Pick one that's doable for you."

Program resources include a reading list, Web links to calculate your carbon footprint and more, and handouts such as "Cool Congregations: 25 Steps Under \$25."

Hoerth summed up, "Hope: we exude that. If we didn't have hope, we would not be doing this."

Contact Hoerth, pathoerth@gmail.com or 580-917-6011; or Batchelder, 405-524-5577.

You'll learn a great deal about our Church in mission worldwide — and especially ministries with children, youths, and women. Business will include electing directors for the National Organization of United Methodist Women.

More information is available on the website www.umwscj.org.

Women in all of Oklahoma's districts are preparing items for the welcome bags, and specific hosting duties will be assigned in the fall.

Serving the poor

The Quadrennial Meeting will include an optional tour of Neighborhood Services Organization, which is a UMW National Mission Institution in Oklahoma City.

It's been helping people in need for almost a century.

NSO is in the process of completing a new building at S.W. 11th and South Walker.

This agency offers transitional housing for homeless families, single women, and single men, helping them move to self-sufficiency. Permanent housing is provided for homeless persons with mental disabilities. A dental clinic offers low-cost services to anyone, regardless of income or insurance.

NSO also operates one of the largest Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) clinics

in the state of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma United Methodist Women are proud to help NSO serve the at-risk population by providing housing solutions and teaching skills to transform lives.

Join us in Woodward

We anticipate a great crowd of witnesses to the many aspects of UMW work — locally and globally — when each local unit sends representatives to our Conference UMW Annual Meeting, set for Oct. 2-3, 2015, at Woodward-First United Methodist Church. We will celebrate the leap of faith that the women take, represented by our F.R.O.G. theme — the many ways we spring into action as we seek better outcomes especially for children, youths, and women everywhere.

At Annual Meeting, UMW leadership for the Church's eight new districts in Oklahoma will officially organize. Bishop Hayes will install both Conference and district UMW officers. They begin their terms of service on Jan. 1, 2016. And we will give ourselves anew to the work of Jesus Christ when we worship through Holy Communion.

It has been said that United Methodist Women operate as the greatest "free university" in the world. To that I say a hearty "AMEN!"

— **Hull, of Waynoka, is the Oklahoma Conference UMW president.**

Child SHARE Family Specialists

Our mission is to provide Christian help, healing, and hope to children and youths through recruiting and supporting Oklahoma foster care families.

There is a child waiting for you, will you help?

**Call the number in your area.**

Ardmore	405-312-8663
Grove	918-453-3503
Lawton	580-483-3130
OKC Metro	405-463-6626
Ponca City	405-802-7697
Ponca City 2	405-802-9687
Shawnee	405-693-7795
Stillwater	405-312-6640
Tulsa Metro	918-794-3876
Weatherford	405-308-7715
Toll Free	866-978-2956

Woodward & McAlester
Coming Soon!

OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST
CIRCLE of CARE
for CHILDREN and YOUTH
www.circleofcare.org



Into the wild

'Where's God in the midst of this?'

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

Summer break is a good time to take it easy, sleep late, and eat what you want when you feel like it — unless you are a seventh- or eighth-grader attending Wilderness Camp.

The specialty summer camp, held annually by the Conference, gives youths practice in forming a Christian community while camping out in a rustic environment.

The boys and girls are divided into small groups. One of their daily tasks is to decide what they will cook for breakfast and dinner.

Deciding on meals gives the youths experience “in dealing with surprises and consequences that may accompany group decisions,” according to written material about the camp.

Camp gives the youths experience with making decisions without adult input.

For example, “a group may decide to go hiking or just sleep late,” instead of meeting to decide on their meal requisition, according to the material. If they miss the deadline for requesting ingredients, they will face empty plates at the next meal.

The adults who are there are fellow campers, said longtime volunteer Carolyn Webster. “You facilitate more than you lead,” she said. “You ask them enough questions until they figure out they know how to do it.”

The camp, which marked its 60th anniversary this year, takes place in a remote area of Canyon Camp.

The experience can be frustrating for youths at first, said Montie Jones, a former campus minister at Cameron University in Lawton. Rev. Jones’ first association with the weeklong camp in western Oklahoma was in 1965.

There is no such thing as a smartphone or electronic game at camp. Those are confiscated for the duration of the program. Even if someone should sneak in a cellphone, there is no reception in the area, camp officials said.

“At first, they don’t like it at all,” Jones said.

“The first two, three days there’s a lot of anger. One of the challenges is to get comfortable with the group that they’re in,” Jones said. “They have to speak up and say what their interests are and what their needs are.”

Campers discuss “what are the particular gifts you might have to contribute to the group,” he said.

Jones said one previous youth camper, named Ann, was so timid that she hid behind

trees and shrubs from the other campers.

“The adult campers in her group would encourage the other youth members of her group to eventually ask Ann to state her opinions or interests,” Jones said. She would do so, but in such a low voice that they had to ask her to speak up.

On the fourth day, when her group had decided to make a dinner of spaghetti and meatballs, Ann’s gifts emerged.

A camper named Sean poured water into a big skillet to cook the pasta.

Ann, who was cooking the meatballs, asked Sean how he was going to drain the spaghetti. She suggested that he get a big lid to keep the spaghetti from spilling on the ground as it was drained.

Sean “assured her he knew what to do,” Jones said. “He came back with the skillet and one lone strand of spaghetti hanging over the lip of the skillet.”

The other campers, except for Ann, told



Sean he had ruined their supper, Jones said.

Ann, meanwhile, had counted the meatballs and figured out that each camper could have 1½ meatballs for dinner.

She gave two meatballs to Sean.

“In her quiet ways, she literally transformed how everyone in that group saw her and saw how they could be,” Jones said.

As the week progresses, Jones said, the campers discuss “What’s this got to do with my faith journey? Where’s God in the midst of this?”

They also discuss how to build a Christian community and “what is involved



Above: Three Wilderness campers find a comfortable spot to rest, with their walking sticks nearby, in a remote section of Canyon Camp, southeast of Hinton. Hiking is one of the main activities during the camp each June. Evenings bring opportunities for stargazing on the smooth, broad rock surfaces. Left: Boys bind logs to form a footbridge for crossing a ditch. Upper left: Made by hanging a tarp, a tent in shady woods offers overnight shelter. Boys and girls are housed separately.

Photos by Carolyn Webster

beaver dam that poses a flooding risk for the area, Jones said.

Wilderness Camp features a cook shack with rustic kitchen and dining area for the noon meal that is prepared and served by adults.

At noon, all the campers share in a Bible reading and story connected with that reading, Jones said. If there is rain, the noon devotional might cover the story of Noah and the flood and how it relates to the campers.

In the evening, the young people go over what happened during the day and help compile a group story about their adventures.

Parents report they often notice a marked change in their offspring after Wilderness Camp.

“Their faith gets grounded,” Jones said.

Ten youths attended the 2015 camp.

in having to develop a Christian community where they live,” Jones said.

The youths work together to hang tarps over frames to make sleeping tents, with separate tents for boys and girls. The youths dig latrines (One is called “John,” the other called “Mary,” Webster said.) They cook breakfast and dinner over a fire pit they themselves dig.

Campers are required to wear leather boots that cover their ankles for protection against snakes and cactus needles.

Activities may include hiking and exploring the canyon. Sometimes, the campers are tasked with dismantling a

Minco men thank public servants

Minco United Methodist Men gave a book that is championed by UMMen nationally to each firefighter and law officer at a recent banquet in the church.

The UMMen, a group of about 10, purchased 100 copies of "Strength for Service to God and Community" as gifts to express their support of the public servants in the community and area. The men's group chartered two years ago.

About 70 people attended the appreciation banquet, despite some flooding that day due to heavy rainfall.

Some honorees conveyed their regrets; they had been called

to work because of the flooding. That's what these public servants do.

And that's why Minco's UMMen wanted to say thank you in a special way.

"It takes a very special person to put themselves in a situation not to help themselves but to help others," said Don McMahon, UMMen secretary.

During the event, church leaders prayed for them and their spouses and families, and the full text of "Taps" was read. Minco's United Methodist Women provided the meal.

The gift book originated in a collection of daily devotionals

published in 1942 for U.S. military personnel. In 2000, young Evan Hunsberger chose updating and republishing "Strength for Service to God and Country" as his Boy Scout Eagle project. The General Commission on United Methodist Men backed his effort.

The newest volume, "... to God and Community," was released in 2013.

Rob Walton, a former Oklahoma Conference president of UMMen, challenged other chapters to follow the lead of Minco's UMMen in distributing the books.

Book update

Home Depot is helping



Don McMahon, left, church member and president of Minco's school board, greets law officers and firefighters as Rob Walton hands them devotional books.

UMMen provide free copies of "Strength for Service" to active U.S. military personnel and veterans. The company's charitable founda-

tion assists nonprofit organizations.

Find out more at: www.gcumm.org/ministries/strength_for_service/



Photo by Vicki Toombs

United Methodism on parade

Top right: A custom-made UM cross-and-flame symbol rides at the front of a parade float during Edmond's Libertyfest on July 4. Randy Stoner, above, a member of Edmond-First, created the large metal sculpture as a gift to First Church. It is mounted on a pivot so it will turn in the wind. Stoner made the sculpture where he works, Smico Manufacturing. Lower right: On the float, First Church members wave U.S. flags and signs promote the many ministries by that church.



Director of fifth- and sixth-grade ministries: Owasso-First. Part-time. Cover letter and resume to Jim Cinocca Jr., 13800 E. 106 St. N, Owasso, OK 74055 or jimcinocca@fumcowasso.org.

Nursery worker: Tulsa-St. Matthew's. Part-time. Must be bilingual in English/Spanish. Email Barbara Youngblood, youngbabs61@yahoo.com.

Child and Youth Advocate Assistant: Spot 31 Inc., Tulsa (a United Methodist ministry). Part-time. Work with children in a multicultural setting. Email Debbie Gant at debbiegant@earthlink.net.

Male and female contemporary worship singers and sound engineer: OKC-St. Andrew's. Part-time. Call Ginny Pass, 405-692-4242 ext. 102, or email gpass@saokc.org.

Organist-accompanist: OKC-Sunny Lane. Part-time. Email church@sunnylaneumc.com or call 405-677-3347.

Coordinator of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries: Idabel-First. Part-time. Contact Cherie Townsend, 512-809-7497, or Pastor David, 580-286-6573. Send resume to church at 302 SE Jefferson St., Idabel, OK 74745.

UMCOR and engineers tackle poisoned river in Bolivia

A remarkable project supported by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has been tackling pollution in a Bolivian mining area and is scoring significant victories.

UMCOR began working with implementing partner Engineers in Action (EIA) in 2014 to clean the Juckucha River. Moss, grass, and algae have begun to grow in the river, and birds have returned to the valley after being absent for decades.

"Farmers who have lived with the poisoned waters for five generations have begun to have hope," said David Stephenson, a retired Oklahoma clergyman and director of EIA.

Some 90,000 people live in the affected area in southwestern Bolivia. Many are impoverished.

For more than a century, the river has suffered from acid drainage from mines at Potosí. Not long ago, tests of the river water near the mines measured an acidity level even higher than that of a car battery.

Treatment has included lining the river with hand-laid limestone blocks, which act as a neutralizer for the acidic water. Other efforts are planned as part of a collaboration with the Bolivian government.

Mike Barbee, technical officer for UMCOR's water, sanitation, and hygiene work, said even greater progress is possible, as one of the Potosí mines was taken over by a new, environmentally concerned owner, and at another, an irresponsible owner fled the country under threat of legal action.

Passages

Rev. Robert E. Dotson, 81, of Verden, died July 25, 2015.

Bob was born March 12, 1934.

He served Centenary and Boston Avenue churches in Tulsa and Tulsa Cooperative Ministries, as well as McAlester-Wesley, Pawnee, Jones, Muskogee-Lakeland Heights, Caddo, Bokchito/Bennington, Lexington, Cromwell, as an associate at OKC-Nichols Hills, and at the University of Tulsa.

Among survivors are daughter Melissa Shafer.

His service was July 29 at Chickasha-Epworth UMC.

Piano/organ player: Noble UMC. Part-time. Email bills@gpcom.net or call 405-872-3913.

MDO/Preschool and Nursery Director: OKC-Chapel Hill. Year-round. Send resume to John Brett at john@raydonex.com.

Church Secretary/Front Office Receptionist: Edmond-New Covenant. Full-time. Contact rgabelmann@ncovenant.org.

Administrative Assistant to Worship and Communications: Edmond-New Covenant United Methodist Church. Full-time. Contact rgabelmann@ncovenant.org.

Custodian: Edmond-New Covenant United Methodist Church. Full-time. Janitorial duties, room set-up, and supply maintenance. Email resume to dcollett@ncovenant.org.



Mary McKnight Escobar, who serves in mission with children of Paraguay, is a native of Tulsa.

Invite missionaries to visit your church

Oklahoma congregations can hear firsthand how God is at work around the world when three missionaries visit the state in late August and late September.

1. A Tulsa native and former member of Tulsa-Christ UMC, missionary Mary McKnight Escobar serves in Paraguay as director of a daycare center for young children. The center is in a poor neighborhood of Asunción.

Escobar is available to visit Oklahoma churches between Aug. 24 and Sept. 4.



The Mefors

2. Missionary couple Emmanuel and Florence Mefor will visit Oklahoma churches Sept. 29-30.

Emmanuel is a medical doctor assigned to the Mutambara Mission Hospital in Zimbabwe along

with Florence, who is a nurse midwife. Dr. Emmanuel specializes in eye surgery.

The hospital includes a maternity unit, female and male wards, outpatient department, AIDS unit, mother and child health wellness care, rehabilitation, pharmacy, and a school of nursing, as well as an eye unit.

Invite these Global Ministries missionaries to visit your church! Contact Karen Distefano, kirie@aol.com, 918-440-9213, to make arrangements.

Jamaicans take note of VIM music team's lessons

Norman church delivers instruments, training

A Volunteers In Mission team representing St. Stephen's UMC in Norman spent a week teaching music to congregations in Savannah-la-Mar, Jamaica, earlier this year.

"We went at the request of Abasilum Smith, who is the pastor of six Methodist churches" in that area, said Venita MacGorman, the Norman church's director of music ministries.

"Five of the six churches had no musical instruments and no music leaders, and very few people in the churches could read music."

For decades the churches had been using an edition of the British Methodist Hymnal that had only lyrics, no musical notation. Rev. Smith's churches recently had obtained new Caribbean Methodist Hymnals, but the people needed assistance learning the hymns. Many lyrics were set to traditional Caribbean tunes.

That's when Smith sought help from St. Stephen's.

The 14 volunteers worked day and night with adults and children. They began with basic music reading skills and basic instrumental techniques.

MacGorman said, "Everyone was immersed in music reading for four or five days, depending upon their school and work schedules."



Adults in Jamaica practice playing a keyboard for their Methodist church.

The VIM team took instruments donated by Oklahomans, including eight guitars, four roll-up keyboards, 36 recorders, music stands, and lots of drums and other percussion instruments.

Volunteer Marci Corey, music director at Piedmont UMC, said the experience was rewarding and inspiring, but also hard work.

"The hours were long, the schedule was rigorous, the resources were not plentiful, and it was hot," she said. "But it was a mission trip, not a vacation, and despite the

challenges it was very, very rewarding."

Some students took copious notes and traveled great distances for the opportunity to learn music.

"It is very hard as adults to try to learn something brand new from scratch, and it can make you feel vulnerable," Corey said. "We were so impressed with their eagerness to play our music games and to take a chance on learning something new."

Norman dentist George Wulfekotte, an amateur guitarist, described one of his

favorite moments. During an evening performance, a smiling little girl sat next to him.

"We were going to sing and play 'All Things Will Be Fine,'" he said. "I told her I can play the song on the guitar, but I don't know the words. Her face lit up, and she looked up at me and said, 'I know the words!' For the next few minutes, it felt like it was just the two of us playing and singing together. It was the best song I ever played."

MacGorman said she was pleased with the progress made by the Jamaican music students in just one week.

"At our closing worship service together, we had young people and adults playing guitar, drums, and keyboard while everyone sang, and it was incredibly beautiful," she said. "I watched those instrumentalists and thought, 'This happened because we were here.'"

Jeni Markham Clewell, associate pastor and director of children's ministries at St. Stephen's, hopes that first mission trip leads to a long relationship between Jamaica and Norman. A second VIM team from the church went to the island in July.

"The Methodists in Savanna-La-Mar trusted us with their dreams of having music play a more vital part in their worship of God and in their daily lives. We were honored to receive that trust and blessed beyond measure by their gracious friendship and warm acceptance," said Rev. Clewell.

— Contributed by Brenda Wheelock

The global church

SCOUTING — The Boy Scouts of America decided July 27 to lift its national ban on openly gay adult leaders. The new policy also allows local church-sponsored units to choose leaders based on the congregation's religious convictions.

"No church will be required to accept any volunteer as a Scout leader simply because of the new policy," Gil Hanke, the top executive of United Methodist Men, said in a statement. The Commission on UMMen is responsible for promoting the use of scouting ministries across the denomination. (UMNS, July 28)

PROPERTY — The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference recently negotiated a way for its fastest-growing church to leave the denomination but keep the church property. Theologically conservative Wesley UMC of Quarryville, now simply Wesley Church, paid that conference \$100,000 for the church buildings and land, and an additional \$58,000 in other conference obligations.

The Conference could have claimed the property under the trust clause of the denomination's *Book of Discipline*.

But Bishop Peggy Johnson said the

specifics of the situation included a nearly \$4 million mortgage on the property. "It seemed to me a terrible thing to assume that debt as an annual conference," she said. (UMNS, July 28)

SHOPPING — The General Council on Finance & Administration has relaunched an online shopping portal, www.UMCMarket.org, using more advanced technology and faster delivery of donations. Online shoppers can donate a percentage of what they spend to their churches or to UM ministries of their choice. (UMNS, July 25)

BIBLE STUDY — Developers of *Disciple Bible Study* are seeking beta 2 churches to test new "Fast Track" material. Other versions of *Disciple* follow a 34-week format. *Disciple Fast Track* shortens weekly class time to 75 minutes and course length to 24 weeks. New print and video materials were created. Retired Bishop Richard Wilke and Susan Fuquay, Christian educator, have developed this option with the permission and endorsement of the United Methodist Publishing House. Find out more at: www.disciplefasttrack.com

Youths at Mission U take on a service project. From left, Sammy Loos, Sara Martin, and Reagan McDaniel help move furniture and paint July 18 at

The Well, a new church being formed at the former OKC-Capitol Hill UMC. Pastor Diana Northcutt said OKC-St. Luke's youths also helped. Plans are for The Well to offer after-school programs, an Indian health clinic, and nutritional programs. The church already hosted a luncheon for Capitol Hill teachers to discuss school-year needs.



Photos by Derrek Belase

Mission u impacts you

Participants get schooled on 3 timely topics

You cannot calculate the full impact of Mission u*, hosted each July at Oklahoma City University, according to the program's 2015 dean, Derrek Belase.

Statistics show 177 women, men, children, and youths participated July 17-20. But Mission u can't be valued on numbers alone.

Many of the adult attendees will present what they learned to people in their local churches, said Rev. Belase. They will share with Sunday school classes of all ages, United Methodist Women, and other groups. And people will take action based on that education.

Thus Mission u is a "train the trainer" event, Belase said. It is not possible to assess its total reach throughout the year.

He said, "We have no sense of the ripple" that moves through Oklahoma's churches from the education gained by those at Mission u.

Each year, studies explore three current issues. For 2015,

they are: "Created for Happiness," "The Church and People With Disabilities," and Latin America.

Special sessions drew attention to Oklahoma-related mission outreach. Karen Distefano spoke about missionaries in and from Oklahoma; Sarah Malloy-Nichols urged young adult mission engagement; and Becky Harrell, mission interpreter for the South Central Jurisdiction, addressed global mission connections. Guest preacher was President Sharon Howell of Saint Paul seminary.

School supplies were collected for Skyline Urban Ministry in Oklahoma City and Restore Hope in Tulsa. Participants carefully counted them at the Weekend and One-Day Plus events.

Among the supplies: 2,283 pencils, 285 boxes of crayons, 448 pairs of scissors, 266 spiral notebooks, 351 erasers, and 25 packages of filler paper.

The youth hands-on project during Mission u was helping Pastor Diana Northcutt prepare to

open The Well, a new church plant in south Oklahoma City.

A project for teens with disabilities in Uruguay benefited from the Mission U offering, which totaled \$2,200. Giving provided one way of taking action based on two of the studies, Latin America and people with disabilities.

Belase said the gift jump-started the denomination's goal to raise \$12,000 for that project in 2015. "Restoring Dignity to Handicapped Teenagers and Young People" is UMC Advance Project No. 3021601. Advance records showed only \$200 had been donated before Mission u began, according to Belase.

Mission u is an annual cooperative effort by Oklahoma's United Methodist Women and the Mission & Service Ministry Team. Jo Ellen Reed, a member of OKC-Sunny Lane church, will be the 2016 dean.

(*Mission u was formerly the School of Christian Mission.)

Dora Spann, left, and Rebecca Kingsbery count stacks of spiral notebooks on July 18 during Mission U. Donated school supplies were equally shared with Skyline Urban Ministry, Oklahoma City, and Restore Hope, Tulsa. The notebook count totaled 266. Both women live in the Ardmore District.

Photo by Holly McCray



Church builds connections by playing with blocks

What connects the unchurched to church members, constructs relationships in the community, and builds bridges between generations?

Here's one answer: Legos. Apparently, those interlocking toy blocks are the perfect icebreaker to bring strangers young and old together in the church.

That is what Celebration UMC found out when it hosted Lego Family Fun Night for the small community of Archer, just west of Gainesville, Fla.

Greg Favazza, director of Family and Children's Ministry, said the congregation was especially interested in reaching out to families with children.

"One day, our pastor asked, 'Hey, what about doing a Lego Night for (our monthly) Family Fun Night?'" Favazza recalled.

His answer? "Yeah, that sounds cool!"

More than 70 people of all generations — 65 percent of them were not church members — came for pizza, popcorn, a movie, and all sorts of activities involving the brightly colored blocks. The evening included building contests, group projects, Lego crossword puzzles, and more.

"This was truly intergenerational. We had someone here as

young as 2 and as old as 80," he said. "The amazing thing is how people of all ages can converge around a plastic block."

Favazza said that before anyone in ministry at Celebration presents any idea, they ask themselves the "so that" question.

"We did Lego Night 'so that' old relationships can be nurtured and new relationships with our surrounding community could be formed in order to create an opportunity to make disciples of Jesus Christ," he said.

Leaders already have seen church participation from some of those who turned out for the free event.

Favazza, a father of two, said, "We are all trying to figure out how to equip families to experience Christ. How do we do it together? How do we raise our children in faith?"

Church members donated new and gently used Legos. The program was promoted on social media and at an Easter egg hunt. Leaders researched community demographics using the Mission-Insite data tool.

The event, unintentionally planned on national Lego Week, was a big success. — *from the Florida Conference, July 6*

DVDs relate to new mission studies

Eight new DVDs have been donated by Mission u 2015 to the collection housed at the United Methodist Ministry Center.

They were shown at the annual mission education event in mid-July. They complement the three new Mission u study topics, but also are a valuable resource for use by other small groups and individual viewers.

The items are available for loan, at no charge, by contacting Chris Schutz, cschutz@okumc.org, 405-530-2075.

They are:

▪ **"Celebrate What's Right With the World,"** a 22-minute National Geographic video featuring photographer DeWitt Jones.

▪ **"History, Culture and Faith in Latin America,"** a 26-minute video.

▪ **"No Sanctuary: Big Business and Family Detention,"** a 30-minute video in English and Spanish featuring UM deaconess Cindy Johnson.

▪ **"A Place for All: Faith and Community for Persons with Disabilities,"** a 57-minute video about people with disabilities who are succeeding in making their faith communities truly inclusive.

▪ **"Mission Giving: United Methodist Women Changing Lives,"** an 8-minute video.

▪ **"United Methodist Women: Faith, Hope, Love in Action,"** a 5-minute video.

▪ **"I Believe You: Faith's Response to Intimate Partner Violence,"** a 57-minute documentary with insight from survivors, clergy, and program leaders from Jewish, United Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelical Lutheran, and Muslim faith groups.

▪ **"Who I Am Called to Be,"** a DVD for laity who feel called by God to make a lifetime commitment to ministries of love, justice, and service. (9:31 minutes)

View the complete list of DVDs for free loan at: www.okumc.org/dvd_library



Legacy Planning Using a Farm or Ranch – Part 3

John and Susannah, ages 75 and 70, are like many Oklahoma farm and ranch owners. They have lived in their home for many years. The time has come, they have decided, to sell the farm, but they really want to continue living in their home.

A great solution is provided for them through legacy planning with the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation. It benefits them right now and will benefit the United Methodist church they love after their lifetimes.

The value of John and Susannah's home and the surrounding property is \$200,000. If they deed their property to the Foundation and retain a *life estate*, they will receive a charitable income tax deduction in the amount of \$112,950. This charitable deduction then could be used to offset the capital gains tax from the sale of their farm.

The couple can continue to live in their home. Then, after their lifetimes, the proceeds from the sale of the property will be used

to establish an endowment that will benefit their church.

This solution for John and Susannah also could apply to farm and ranch property that you own. Like the couple, you may be interested in this opportunity to continue living in your home even after the rest of your property is sold.

When property is sold, one way to offset the capital gains liability upon the sale is to make a charitable gift that will generate an income tax deduction. A charitable *life estate* permits a farm or ranch family to remain in the home and receive an income tax deduction that could offset other income taxes.

With a *life estate*, the family deeds a remainder interest in the home and surrounding land to the Foundation and reserves the use of the property for their lifetime(s). By setting up the *life estate*, the family is allowed a charitable deduction for the current value of the remainder interest in the property. For a *life estate* to be deductible,

the property must be (1) a personal residence or (2) farm or ranch property, i.e. land used for agricultural production.

When a *life estate* is established, the *life estate* holder still is responsible for maintenance, insurance, and taxes. An agreement is executed with the Foundation, which clarifies that the holder of the *life estate* is responsible for maintaining and caring for the property during their lifetime in the same manner as they did before establishing the *life estate*.

A family may be concerned that creation of a *life estate* will deny the *life estate* holder flexibility in the future if circumstances change. Although a *life estate* is an irrevocable transfer, it is a valuable property interest that gives the *life estate* holder several options.

- First, the holder and the remainder charity could jointly sell the property and

receive their respective shares of the sale proceeds. Depending on the value of the property and the *life estate* holder's age, a joint sale could produce significant sales proceeds for the holder.

- Second, the holder could gift the *life estate* to the remainder charity for an additional charitable income deduction.

- Third, the holder could transfer the *life estate* to fund a charitable gift annuity or a charitable remainder trust in exchange for the value of the remaining *life estate*.

Are you interested in learning more about a life estate? If so, please contact David Battles, CPA, at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org. There is no obligation and all inquiries are confidential.

THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION
4201 N CLASSEN BOULEVARD, OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73118-2400
WWW.OKUMF.ORG • 800-259-6863



What would you do?

Continued from page 1

Eisenhower International School, said she was having fun “making stuff and playing games.”

What's her favorite thing? “Everything.”

Ashley Aguero, a Kendall-Whittier student, said it was fun because “you get to get balloons, get your face painted, and get tattoos.”

Two carnivals were held — one for students just out of kindergarten through second grade, and one for third- through sixth-graders. The students at the carnival were part of a mentoring program sponsored by True Blue Neighbors, an ongoing community service initiative of the University of Tulsa.

“It's so special what the church is doing,” said Danielle Hovenga with True Blue Neighbors. “What a great idea. These kids don't get carnival experiences that often.”

The project originated with a couple at Christ Church who wanted to anonymously donate \$10,000, said Bob Feist, senior pastor.

Rather than just donating money to the church, he said, they wondered if it would be a meaningful experience to young people to give them each \$500 and tell them to go do something good with it.

“I put myself in a high school student's shoes and decided that would probably be something I would always remember ... a



In Tulsa, elementary students at Kendall-Whittier School try to score in a bowling game. With \$500, high school junior Madison Erickson and her Tulsa-Christ UMC peers planned and led two age-appropriate carnivals.

life-shaking experience,” Rev. Feist said.

He pitched the idea to Stephen Luttenberg, director of student ministry at

the church, who liked it immediately.

“We had some brainstorming meetings both with parents and leaders,” Luttenberg

said, “and we felt like this would be a great opportunity to teach the students how to be the hands and feet of Christ.”

“This is an amazing kingdom opportunity for our students and those involved — a great way to lift up others for Jesus' name sake,” he said.

Twenty-four students, from seventh through 12th grades, accepted the challenge. The anonymous couple upped the donation to cover all the students.

Some are working in pairs or groups, pooling their money.

They were assigned adult mentors to help them develop and complete their projects, and submitted written proposals.

Bob Brooks, a 46-year member of the church and recent retiree from NORDAM, is mentoring Fischer Teague, who is using his money to buy baseball bats, gloves, and balls for children who cannot afford them.

“I think it's really good,” Brooks said of the project. “It lets kids be generous about doing something good for someone else.”

Projects will be completed over the course of the summer, and on Aug. 9, students will share their experiences with the congregation.

(Reprinted with permission, the Tulsa World, July 10, 2015)