

timers Immigration Immersion team in Tucson, AZ, where we learned a great deal about immigration on our southern border.

There are many reasons why I find these mission experiences so meaningful. Greg Forrester once said, "The project is not the project; the project is the people." The people include both our fellow team members and those we are trying to serve. VIM teams often ask each other at the end of a day "Where have you seen God today?" It is always in the people with whom we are working. In most situations we work WITH local people and form meaningful relationships with them. Language differences can be overcome with translators and smiles. Sometimes we share humor. Sometimes we share worship services, hymns, and prayers. Sometimes they teach us things like how to build without electricity, how to make tortillas, what the inside of a cacao bean looks like. Sometimes our money enables a new building or some clinic days. Sometimes our primary contributions are hope, friendship, and love.

The United Methodist Volunteers in Mission motto is "Christian Love in Action." We as volunteers are guests wherever we go. We learn about cultures, poverty, strengths, hospitality, and faith. When we come home, we try to share our experiences and to help others become more aware of and sensitive to the lives of people in other situations. It is my hope that

many others will be able to experience the rewards of "Christian Love in Action" either as volunteers, enablers of volunteers, or recipients of volunteer projects.

Sneak peek at the "Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus" issue of the *Advocate*:

LIFE-LONG MISSION

UNY Volunteer in Mission Coordinators, Donna and Roger Cullen dedicate their lives to working alongside many who help those in need. Read about their experiences of healing and the life-changing stories of those whose relationships preceded transformation.

TRANSFORMATION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

For the past 15 years, Diane Saxton of Fleming Federated Church took a team of up to 20 volunteers and traveled to the Dominican Republic, working on numerous projects in the village of Los Alcarizzos, which is a very impoverished area outside of Santo Domingo. Learn how much they accomplished over the years.

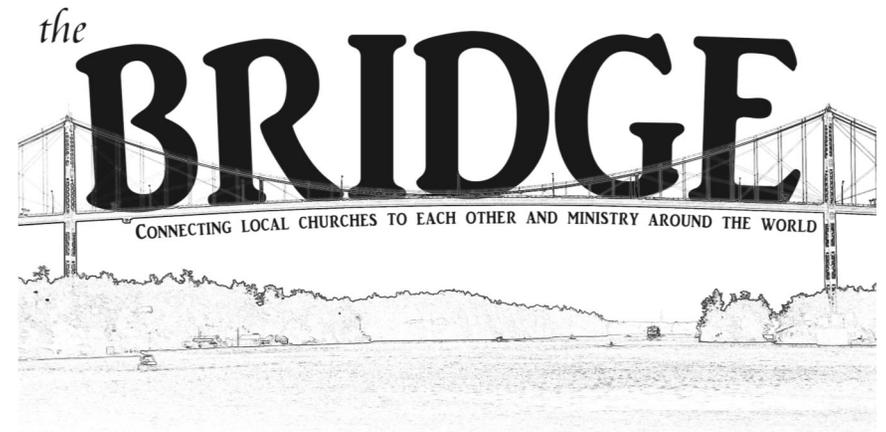
HOW RED BIRD MISSION SERVES APPALACHIA

Red Bird Mission was established in 1921 in Beverly, Kentucky as a workcamp. Since then, it has offered many more amenities to help the people of Appalachia. Learn how the Upper New York Conference has been involved with Red Bird for so many years.

The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:

www.unyumc.org

Curious about what the online worship experiences are in Upper New York? Visit the Conference website for a full list of what is available at <http://www.unyumc.org/about/find-an-online-worship-services>.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

A look inside!

The Spring 2020 issue of the *Advocate* available May 1

Page 2

Sneak peek at the "Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus" issue of the *Advocate*

Page 4

The Spring 2020 issue of the *Advocate* available May 1

It is likely that you are becoming accustomed to virtual ways of learning—the next issue of the *Advocate*, to be uploaded by May 1, is an e-*Advocate*, which you can access at this link: www.unyumc.org/news/advocate.

This issue focuses on “Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus.” Mission work has been an enriching part of many peoples’ lives across Upper New York. Several stories similar to Janet and Peter Huston’s fill this comprehensive issue that dives into local, national, and international mission work.

Why I am grateful for VIM work

By Janet Huston, Schenectady First UMC

I am very grateful for the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission program. Through it, our lives have been greatly enriched and, hopefully, we have been able to improve the lives of others.

When my husband, Peter, and I were first married, we lived in Boston and Whitman, MA. We did some local volunteering there. When we moved to the Schenectady area in 1965, we chose First United Methodist Church (FUMC) of Schenectady because of the church’s concerns about and involvement with social justice. We volunteered locally through the church and community organizations.

Then in the 1977-78 school year we had a very special opportunity! Rev. Randy Nugent from the Board of National Missions spoke at our church about the need for volunteers. Our family was able to spend a year at the Navajo Methodist Mission School (NMMS) in Farmington, NM. Pete taught math and coached, and I was a school nurse.

Together we were the senior high boys’ dorm counselors. Our two older children were in 7th and 9th grades at NMMS; the younger two attended Farmington’s public elementary school. Although there were some difficult times, overall it was a wonderful year in which we learned about Navajo culture, learned to love NM, and made some lifelong friends.

When we returned home, we resumed our previous activities. Pete taught math and coached at Scotia-Glenville High School. I worked at Schenectady City and County Health Departments and at Hospice of Schenectady. Our children returned to public schools. We continued to volunteer locally.

Then in 1992 our pastor, Rev. Leon Adkins Jr., and his wife, Bonnie Totten Adkins, took us on a volunteer team to Nicaragua. We were hooked! In 1998, Pete volunteered during the ice storm in northern NY. In May, 1999, the Board of Global Missions subsidized an intense week in Bolivia for health care workers. Leaders from the southern hemisphere taught us about appropriate health care in developing countries.

Later that year, we were part of an FUMC team to Nicaragua. This was the second of a total of nine trips to Nicaragua, the second poorest country in this hemisphere. (Haiti is first). On some of these trips, our host was CEPAD, an ecumenical Protestant organization that focuses on community development. On other trips we worked with Acción Médica Cristiana (Christian Medical Action). This group provides basic health care and education to the poorest parts of the country starting with good water and latrines. Our church now has a covenant relationship with



Dr. Belinda Forbes, a UM missionary dentist who works with AMC. On some trips both agencies worked together to help us with coordination and translation. We went wherever these agencies decided we would be most useful (and where the roads were passable). Usually part of the team did health care and education while the other part of the team worked on construction.

In 2002, Lee Adkins gave us another challenge/opportunity -- Pete and I became coordinators of Troy Conference VIM. Because Troy Conference had covenant relationships with Brazil and Mozambique, we joined Conference teams to both of those countries. Our other foreign experiences were Primetimers trips to Northern Ireland and

Italy.

Interspersed with our international trips were several domestic mission experiences. In 2010, the Troy Conference was dissolved, and our area became part of Upper NY Annual Conference. Pete and I both joined the Upper NY VIM steering committee. After Pete’s death in 2016, I remained on that committee and continue to value the experiences and friendships of Volunteers in Mission. I have assisted our youth group at FUMC with planning their trips and was able to be part of an intergenerational team from our church to Mission Central in Mechanicsburg, PA. In early March of 2020, I was part of a Prime-

Continued on page 4