

# Christian Partners

## From Christian Appalachian Project

WINTER 2010

### *Cincinnati woodworkers craft toys for Christmas*

Santa's elves have been busy in Cincinnati since the summer time when they began to plan for this year's wooden toys. They gathered to discuss what they would like to make, tested out patterns and organized work days that would utilize the time and talents of everyone involved. Then on November 15, they drove boxes and boxes of toys to the Christian Appalachian Project's offices in Mt. Vernon.

It started in 1988 with one man crafting 15 – 20 toys after learning about CAP. He realized he might not be able to address all the problems families in the mountains were facing, but he could make toys for the children.

The effort now includes the Cincinnati Woodworking Club (which has more than 150 members) as well as various businesses and individuals who they've recruited to help. This year, they renamed the project the Jim Schaefer Toy Project in honor of the man who got it all started.

"I've been pleasantly amazed at what people will do," says John Leonardi, who leads the project along with Terry Elfers. He recalls story after story of the generosity

WOODWORKERS CONT. INSIDE ►



### CHRISTMAS BASKETS COMBINE PERSONAL AND GROUP EFFORTS

For the past 11 years, Pleasantville Presbyterian Church in Pleasantville, N.Y. has been sending teams of teens and adults to repair homes throughout the Appalachian region. Kim Kleman Lewis, who leads the church's Mission Team, began to wonder how they might expand on that effort and make assisting Appalachian families a year-round effort.

That's when Judy Dieckman, who had served during the summer trips, told Kleman Lewis about CAP's Christmas Basket program. She had been sponsoring families for 20 years or so.

CAP's Christmas Basket program identifies families in need of assistance during the Christmas season. CAP provides information about the families to Christmas Basket sponsors who are willing to purchase gifts for them. The information includes ages and sizes of the family members along with a wish list of items they hope to receive.

Kleman Lewis says their church is relatively small with 150 or so active members of a congregation of 251. "This effort has captivated people. I think it's because it is such a personal project; I mean, you're helping someone whose name (even shoe size!) you know," she says.

The church started out sponsoring 16 families. The next year, that grew to 25 and this year it will be 30. They begin their promotional effort in October with Sunday bulletin and church newsletter announcements,

CHRISTMAS BASKETS CONT. INSIDE ►

# Kentuckians volunteer

## Homegrown volunteers add new dimension for CAP

CAP has been blessed with dedicated volunteers since its beginning when Fr. Beiting's own family from northern Kentucky helped him with so many aspects of getting the organization started. Since then, however, the vast majority of volunteers have come from out-of-state. That's why we took notice recently when we realized that six of CAP's volunteers are Kentuckians. Meet five of them here.

### Sarah Eisenberg, Richmond, Kentucky

"Just because you are from Kentucky doesn't mean you know all about Kentucky. There is always something to learn," says volunteer Sarah Eisenberg. She became acquainted with CAP when she participated in WorkFest with her college during spring break.



"I saw a vision of what ministry could be. I remember being encouraged to not just spend time working on repairing the house but also to spend time with the people and get to know them as well.

Knowing that the people were cared for as fellow human beings created in God's image and not looked on as just a project to fix made up my mind. I wanted to be a part of that."

Since volunteering, Eisenberg has expanded her understanding of the state, saying it's possible to travel just 10 minutes and see a whole different side of Kentucky. "People are people, no matter where you go," she says. "CAP provides a lot of opportunities to get to know these sides of Kentucky you may not have seen before as well as a way to see what awesome things God is doing here, way back in the hollows out of sight but certainly not out of mind."

### Chris Barnett, Burlington, Kentucky

Chris Barnett also learned about CAP through first participating in a group service project. He loved the experiences he had with his youth group and decided to dedicate two years to serving CAP.



"I love it down here," he says. "It's amazing. It's so self rewarding to know you are helping out your own state and knowing you are doing a great good for your own community."

### Rachel Weiderman, Danville, Kentucky

Rachel Weiderman was looking for opportunities to serve as an AmeriCorps volunteer when she learned about CAP through online research. Watching a news story about a woman who had volunteered convinced her it was something she wanted to do as well.



"Kentuckians should know how much different the culture is in Appalachia compared to the central part of Kentucky where I'm from. I think that Eastern Kentucky gets a bad reputation, and it's not always high up on the tourism list, but it is truly a rich cultural area full of many beautiful people."

Weiderman would like to see more people from Kentucky get involved with CAP.

VOLUNTEERS CONT. ON BACK ►

## Fundraising continues for challenge grant

Fundraising continues as CAP works to meet the challenge grant from the Louisville-based James Graham Brown Foundation. The foundation is contributing .50 for every \$1 donated by June 2011, up to \$500,000. A recent major gift boosted the match significantly, but there's still more work to do.

The three new structures the grant is building will double CAP's volunteer capacity from 1,500 to 3,000 per year.



The largest project is in Floyd County where the Mission Center will be able to handle 132 short-term volunteers who come primarily with groups.

The new eight-bedroom McCreary Volunteer House (being built in these photos) will increase that program's capacity to place 10 long-term volunteers.

They will be able to deepen CAP's services in that highly distressed county. A new dormitory at Camp Andrew Jackson will house up to

40 counselors or short-term volunteers in Jackson County for summer camp or home repair projects.



◀CONT. FROM WOODWORKERS

their requests for assistance have been met with.

For example, the group realized they were spending a lot of time making the dowel rods they needed for the toys. So they contacted a company about donating them. Leonardi drove out to pick up what they said they could give expecting 200 or so. Instead, he filled the entire pick up truck with various sizes of dowel rods.

There are also stories of good-hearted help from individuals associated with the club. One club member called Leonardi to ask if he could drop off some school supplies for the children. Leonardi expected maybe a couple of bags of items. Instead, he found nine or so boxes stacked in his driveway.

Then there was Sylvia Schaeffer's donation. She wanted to continue to support her husband's pet project after he died, so she paid for a



truck rental so the club could transport everything in one vehicle rather than three.

"There are so many stories like that," Leonardi says, noting that members give of their time and supplies.

Information about the most popular toys and patterns is available online so anyone can participate. Some members of the woodworking club operate in small groups on the project. Leonardi works with four other members on toys. They get together about 10 times, beginning in June, to decide

what and how many of each item to make. One member takes charge of each item, makes a sample then directs the group when they work on it. They usually get

together for about six hours per session with a lunch break.

"It's become a social type thing," Leonardi says. "We're friends."

But friends could do something less time consuming if they chose. Not this group. "We see there's a need and there are children who otherwise would do without," he says. "We can't address the total issue but we could provide children with toys."

*(Thanks to volunteer Rich Layer for providing the photos.)*



◀CONT. FROM CHRISTMAS BASKETS

supplemented by an in-person announcement. Then, during coffee hour after church, mission team members put out the sheets about the families for church members to choose from.

Although individual families buy the gifts, the church also accepts cash donations to offset the shipping costs. Kleman Lewis says the local United Parcel Service store has offered them a discounted rate in the past.

In addition to church members who choose to donate cash instead of gifts, the junior and senior high youth groups have each undertaken special Christmas Basket projects. They have worked together on bake sales and a car wash to raise money for gifts so they can also sponsor families.

"During the weeks people are shopping for their gifts, I love to listen in on the conversations during coffee hour. Invariably, folks are sharing what they bought the kids in their 'adopted' family, or noting how they went out of their way to buy Mom something just for her because all she asked for was towels and pots and pans," Kleman Lewis says.

**"During the weeks people are shopping for their gifts, I love to listen in on the conversations during coffee hour. Invariably, folks are sharing what they bought the kids in their 'adopted' family, "**

She saw how the effort has enriched their own church members after her father died. Kleman Lewis said being involved in the giving nature of the project greatly helped her mother deal with that loss.

In an effort to make the project something for the entire community, they decided to sponsor a wrapping party at the church where folks can have coffee and dessert and wrap presents together, sharing the Christmas spirit.

Sometimes, Christmas Basket donors get an unexpected surprise from their sponsorship. Kleman Lewis recalls how she chose an outfit with Tinkerbell on the shirt for a little girl on her list. Months later when she received the CAP newsletter, she saw the child holding up the Tinkerbell outfit. "She was a beaming

little girl who looked just like Tinkberbell. Amazing."

This year on Christmas morning, some families from Pleasantville Presbyterian will be thinking not only about their own celebrations, but also about that family in the mountains to whom they sent Christmas greetings.

## Volunteer transitions onto Christian Partners staff

After three years of working as a high school counselor, Jenny King decided to use her talents as a volunteer caseworker for CAP. King served in CAP's Family Advocacy program from 2008 until a few months ago when she took a dual job with the organization: she's working half time with family advocacy and half time with Christian Partners.

The Paris, Tennessee native originally thought she would serve then return south, but that changed. "I love CAP, I

love what they do and I've learned to love the area," she says.

She's happy for the opportunity to work with people who support the organization's mission. "I really enjoy speaking to donors and groups about CAP," she says.

What she most wants people to know about CAP is that unlike some nonprofits, CAP serves people by building relationships. That, she says, is likely one of the reasons so many volunteers stick around or return.



◀CONT. FROM VOLUNTEERS

"There's such a high need in this area, and they don't have to travel all over America to make a difference. They can stay in their own state and help both the people in Appalachia, and themselves."

### Jessica Phelps, Edmonton, Kentucky

"I felt led to come and do this for a year," Jessica Phelps says about her service with CAP. "I looked at it as helping my neighbor . . . It makes you happy when you know you can help people out."



That's exactly what Phelps has been doing during her volunteer year. She wants her fellow Kentuckians to know, "CAP does really good work helping children and

families." She also appreciates the diversity CAP brings to the state in the form of its volunteers—people of all ages who come from all over the country. During their time with CAP, she says, they experience the beauty of her home state.

### Lynn Hardesty, Madisonville, Kentucky

Lynn Hardesty didn't like admitting it, but she hadn't heard of CAP until Diane Sawyer's feature on 20/20 about Appalachia. "I was so surprised to see something like this in Kentucky. Why hadn't I heard about it before?" she remembers thinking.



Hardesty had already contemplated

service work after college. Although she thought about the Peace Corps, the idea of serving in her home state was special to her. She knew there were problems in Appalachia, but hadn't realized there was an organization doing something to address them. "The whole mission felt very positive."

Her experience with CAP has showed her that people in Appalachia are often living in difficult situations but they have a lot of pride and are sometimes embarrassed to ask for help. When she thinks about people from her hometown who associate Appalachia with vacation spots in the Smoky Mountains they like to frequent, she says, "They have no idea about what I see." She would like to see that awareness increase so Kentucky can do a better job of taking care of its own people.



## CONTACT US:

1-800-755-5322

christianpartners@chrisapp.org  
www.christianapp.org

CHRISTIAN APPALACHIAN PROJECT  
CHRISTIAN PARTNERS  
4192 NORTH WILDERNESS ROAD  
MT. VERNON, KY 40456