



Great Lakes relief sales bring fun, food and funds for MCC

Relief sales in the Great Lakes area are a fun opportunity for people of all ages to come together and have a good time, while raising money for the work of MCC. The beginning of fall brings the end of the 2008 relief sale season in our region, but seven successful relief sales raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for MCC.

Each sale had its unique qualities, whether it was the mud volleyball tournament at the Black Swamp Benefit Bazaar in Wauseon, Ohio, or the twin ice cream mixers driven by a scale model steam engine at the Northern Michigan Relief Sale in Fairview, Michigan.

Of course one of the major highlights of any relief sale is the abundance of food – of both the international and traditional varieties. From apple fritters to egg rolls, paedros to kettle corn, visitors to Great Lakes relief sales had no shortage of food choices.

As in years past, the auctions provided lots of fun and surprises. Bidders outbid each other for quilts, baked goods, handicrafts, woodcrafts and a wide assortment of goods.

Even in the midst of our uncertain economy, faithful volunteers and participants helped to make the relief sales a success. Carl Dube, chairman of the Northern Michigan Relief Sale, summed up the experience of many relief sales throughout the region.

“As we approached the sale weekend amid gloomy reports on the Michigan economy, we remembered the preparations of Elijah as he built the altar, piled up the wood, added the sacrificial bull, and then doused it all with water,” he said. “God was responsible for bringing the fire and He did. So, we just followed Elijah’s example and prepared for the sale, relying on God to bring the buyers and generous donors, which He did.”



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The Arthur (Illinois) Mennonite Relief Sale provided fun for people of all ages. A special children’s auction gave young bidders a chance to get in on the action.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered, donated items or came to a Great Lakes relief sale – we look forward to next season! ☺

For more information about relief sales, visit mcc.org/reliefsales

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RESHAPING MCC FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



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We want to hear from you!

MCC Great Lakes is hosting six regional meetings of “New Wine, New Wine-skins: Reshaping MCC for the 21st Century.” In these meetings, you’ll have the chance to share your views on the current state of MCC and your hope for the future of MCC. Visit mcc.org/greatlakes for a schedule of dates and locations in your area.

The end of another great SWAP season

Each year, the SWAP (Sharing with Appalachian People) program gives groups and individuals unique service opportunities as they address sub-standard housing.

For the 2008 summer season, 78 groups served at one of the five SWAP locations throughout Kentucky (Eolia, Harlan, Hindman and Isom) and West Virginia (Elkhorn). In total, 1,366 volunteers spent a week of their summer volunteering and repairing over 100 homes for residents in Appalachia.

In addition to the weekly volunteer groups, 23 summer staff dedicated their entire summer to working with the SWAP program.

Jaime and Marvin Zazvorka-Trapnell, location coordinators at the Isom, Kentucky site, enjoy seeing relationships formed between the groups who come to work and the homeowners. One of the Zazvorka-Trapnell's summer groups was from Ridgeview Mennonite Church in Gordonville, Pennsylvania, and they worked on putting metal on the roof for a homeowner named Toto, whose wife is rapidly dying of cancer.



Thomas and Mark, two volunteers from Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church, put down a metal roof for a homeowner in Eolia, Kentucky.

"A deep connection was made between the volunteers and Toto," said Jaime. "The group was able to give Toto's wife a handmade quilt and comfort her while they were there. Much to our shock, they both made it to our Friday night dinner. The evening was very tear-filled by the group, as well as Toto, and some deep threads that only God can form between strangers were made that week."

SWAP is about repairing homes and making them more livable for homeowners, but it's also about cultural exchange and learning from each other.

"The best part of summer for us is watching the connections and relationships that are made between people of very different backgrounds with different lives, different beliefs, different ways of doing things, as only Jesus can make happen," said the

Zazvorka-Trapnells. "It's a time when we see hope for unity in our world." ☺

Visit mcc.org/swap to see how you or your group can participate in SWAP next summer.

New leaders team up in Appalachia

The positions of SWAP (Sharing With Appalachian People) location coordinators have always been filled by married couples in the past. But Carrie Billett and Michelle Norman, two single women, are teaming up to lead the location in Harlan, Kentucky.

SWAP location coordinators are responsible for the day-to-day activities and work sites of the SWAP locations, including organizing and leading weekly groups.

Both Billett and Norman have volunteered with SWAP in the past and feel called to work with this program on a long-term basis. "Ever since my first time working with SWAP four summers ago, I have wanted to go back long term," said Norman, who has served as Material Resource Coordinator for MCC Great Lakes for the past four years. "When I heard this position was open and another single person was also applying, I decided to apply and see where God took us."

"God used my time here to show me just how blessed and privileged I am, and to change my perspective on many things," said Billett, who served as a summer staff member at Harlan last year. "I know that there will be many challenges here, but I know that God has brought me this far and he will continue leading me."

Billett and Norman realize that this is new territory for location coordinators, but they look forward to working together. "I think that Michelle and I will bring a new perspective to SWAP Harlan," said Billett. "Married couples have an advantage as they have already

figured out how they work best as a team, but we can learn that as well and build from each other's strengths and weaknesses."

"Having two women in this position will have its challenges, but I can see positives also," said Norman. "I know that we are both passionate about the work and are capable both in skills and organization." ☺



Michelle Norman (left) and Carrie Billett (right) are the new location coordinators for the Harlan, Kentucky, SWAP site.

Peace and transformation in Colombia

Erin Sigler, from Akron, Ohio, is an MCC worker currently serving in Cali, Colombia.

The past two years I have been working with Edupaz, an office in Cali, Colombia, that focuses on conflict transformation and mediation in the schools, community, churches and families. I was originally going to be focused primarily on the mediation program in the schools, but being part of a small team (at times ranging from four to nine people), I inevitably became involved in other projects and general planning for the office as well.

After four years at Goshen College and doing a lot of talking about conflict transformation, my experiences in Cali have provided me with the opportunity to put those theories into practice in a city that has been deeply affected by violence caused by the armed groups, drug-traffickers, gangs, and more than half the population living in poverty. More than anything, it has been a lesson in my own violent nature as a human being and my own need for transformation.

As of April of this year, I was offered the position as facilitator of the pilot of the Seed Program here in Colombia and extended my contract till 2011 (nearly five years in total). The program is a new two-year service opportunity with MCC that consists of a cross-cultural team of eight to ten young adults between ages 20-30, with the focus being on service, education and advocacy. The young adults will be placed in five different regions, where they will be serving with local churches that have ministries with single mothers, children, the elderly and displaced persons in areas such as peace building, micro-finance, soup kitchens, tutoring, HIV/AIDS prevention and reconciliation.

The group will have a three-month intensive training at the beginning of their term and then meet every two to three months throughout the two years for continued training. They will then have several weeks designated at the end of their term to prepare for re-entry to their local communities. The hope is that they will strengthen their understanding of how their own histories, economics, theology and lifestyles are connected to the communities where they are serving in



Erin Sigler, an MCC worker, does an interactive activity with children in Cali, Colombia, during a Pan y Paz (Bread and Peace) event.

both positive and negative ways.

The first group of Seed Participants was selected in June and we have formed a team of three males and six females from Canada, United States, Bolivia, Guatemala and Colombia. We are currently working on fine-tuning the curriculum and preparing for their arrival in February 2009.

We are very excited at the potential that lies within this program and the possibility for growth in MCC on various levels. We ask for your prayers as we embrace the challenges and lessons that lie ahead. ☺

- Erin Sigler

Read more about Erin's experiences serving with MCC:

www.erinsigler.blogspot.com

Celebrate MCC

MCC Great Lakes Annual Gathering

February 27-28, 2009

Central Mennonite Church Archbold, Ohio

Look for additional information and registration at mcc.org/greatlakes



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School for Peace Coordinator - Colombia

Graphic Designer - Akron, Pennsylvania

Contact Mary Ann Weber
574-534-4133 or mweber@mcc.org

mcc.org/serve

Mexico: our neighbor

Jorge Vielman is the MCC Great Lakes regional associate for northwest Ohio and Michigan. He participated in a learning tour to Mexico on May 3 -10, 2008.

The study-tour that I was part of was designed to provide an overview of Mexican history and politics, along with a sampling of Mexico's culture. Our goal was to increase understanding of the social, economic and political forces that have led to Mexican immigration in recent decades and changed the demographics of Northern Indiana.

I learned very quickly that the unjust policies the United States has imposed on Mexico have forced many people to immigrate to the North. NAFTA is one example of the monster problem that has caused many Mexicans to flee. Many small businesses were obligated to close, because they cannot compete with Wal-Mart's prices.

The experience was extremely educational, inspiring and rewarding. The total trip has given me a better understanding of social and political issues pressing Mexican people on a daily basis.

Some places that we visited were the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe; Teotihuacan with the Pyramid of the Sun and Pyramid of the Moon; a briefing at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City; the Palace of Cortez in Cuernavaca with a marvelous Diego Rivera mural; a field trip to the village of Buenavista with visits to the local market, a factory, health clinic and schools.

Centro Educativo la Buena Tierra in Cuernavaca was one of my favorite stops in Cuernavaca. I learned that MCC is making a positive contribution to education and peace. Many children are being helped by MCC's Global Family and SALT (Serving and Learning Together) programs.



Jorge Vielman, MCC Great Lakes regional associate, stands in front of "The Palace" in the old capital city of Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) during his recent learning tour to Mexico.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generosity and to invite you to continue to support MCC programs, not only in Mexico, but around the world. 🌍

- Jorge Vielman

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in an MCC learning tour?

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about upcoming opportunities.



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