

# MOUNTAIN ECHOES

Episcopal Appalachian Ministries

EPISCOPAL APPALACHIAN MINISTRIES

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SPRING 2008

## Southern Ohio churches help working poor close income gap

by Ariel Miller  
Diocese of Southern Ohio's Episcopal  
Community Services Foundation

Whether it's a free supper or a food pantry in the undercroft, the spirit of Episcopal community ministry in Appalachian Ohio is hands-on and people-to-people. Now, Ohio Episcopalians are starting to offer the same friendly outreach with a laptop. Instead of serving a plate of lasagna, the church volunteer can hand someone a completed tax return with the news that they are getting \$5,000 back from the IRS.

They can do this by using free, internet-based software called the Benefit Bank.

A few hours of volunteer time can yield a huge economic impact. On Feb. 2, for example, the Community Action Agency in Zanesville held a Benefit Bank tax clinic. The families assisted will receive \$72,000 in tax credits and refunds.

### Transforming lives

A 90-minute session can transform lives. Last year, diaconal student Arthur Mills helped a mother of four in Dayton get almost \$7,000 back on her taxes. She used it to move her children out of a dangerous school district and buy new appliances. In Cincinnati, an Appalachian friend I assisted used her IRS check to pay off a debt imposed by her landlord when she broke the lease because her infant daughter had become lead-poisoned. She had enough money left over to buy a second car. Until then, she, the baby, and her 20-year-old son had had to get up at 5 A.M. every morning to get the family to daycare and two different jobs on time.



The new CAIN choice pantry, in Cincinnati's Appalachian Northside neighborhood, is a prime Benefit Bank site. While waiting to select food and other items, people can sit down with a Benefit Bank volunteer to do taxes or work on applications for food stamps, child care vouchers, HEAP, or Medicaid. Smiling at the door: ECSF Vice President Paul Rank, whose parish, St. Timothy's, helped renovate CAIN to accommodate the Choice Pantry and nice spaces for intake and referral.

Photo by Ariel Miller

In October 2005, Southern Ohio's Episcopal Community Services Foundation (ECSF) learned that the National Council of Churches had raised the money to develop the Benefit Bank, a simple, counselor-assisted tool to complete tax returns and applications for food stamps, child care vouchers, Medicaid, and energy assistance. Piloted in Pennsylvania, the Benefit Bank was scheduled to be adapted next for use in Ohio.

Thanks to a grant from the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund, ECSF started in 2005 to recruit churches and grantees to serve as Benefit Bank sites, and teamed up with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks to plan a statewide outreach strategy using the 12 regional foodbanks as hubs. When the program went live in Ohio in January 2006, volunteers from four Episcopal churches were in the very first group to be trained.

Together, tax credits and public benefits have the potential to add \$10,000 or more to

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Spaces for shopping and counseling at CAIN, a Benefit Bank site in Cincinnati. At right: Bishop Price wearing his Man of God baseball cap.



### EAM CONTACT INFORMATION

With the retirement of Sandy Elledge and the appointment of Mike Maloney as Interim Executive Director, the addresses for EAM transactions have changed. All financial matters should be sent to Sandy Elledge, 5204 Vanardo Way, Knoxville, TN 37912, email smelledge@aol.com. All other correspondence and questions should be addressed to Michael Maloney, EAM Interim Executive Director, 5829 Wyatt Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45213, phone 1-800-956-2776, email meamon@aol.com.

## Elledge Fund available to help small congregations

The EAM Board established The Elledge Scholarship Fund last fall to honor retiring Executive Coordinator, Sandy Elledge. Reflecting her deep commitment to small congregations, the fund is to be used to make it possible for members of small Appalachian congregations to attend national or regional conferences or training events that will enhance their ministry/ministry development.

Any small congregation in an Episcopal Appalachian Ministries diocese is eligible to apply. A letter should be sent to Mike Maloney, 5829 Wyatt Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45213, or emailed to him at meamon@aol.com. The request will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and funds granted accordingly. The request should be made at least four weeks in advance of the event.

The letter should include a short description of the event to be attended, a description of the role the applicant plays in the local congregation and how he/she feels this event will be beneficial to the life of the congregation.

A budget for expenditures (registration, meals, lodging, travel) must be included with the request. At least one-third of the cost of attending the event should come from the congregation and/or diocese. Applicant should have made a request for scholarship aid from the event to be attended and/or from continuing education funds from the diocese.

A letter of support from the rector/vicar/missioner or congregational leader must be included with the request. Wherever possible, preference will be given to congregations seeking to send more than one person (a team) to the event.



## 2008 WORK CAMP DATES

EAM will sponsor three work camps in 2008: July 13-19; July 20-26; and July 27-August 2. Spaces are available in the first and last week; the second week is already filled.

Work camps are open for individuals and small groups (usually no more than 6 from any one congregation). Work campers must be at least rising tenth graders. There is no upper age limit.

EAM bases its work camp experiences on the last three questions of the Baptismal Covenant: "Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?...Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons?...Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" In this context, the work comes second to forming relationships between the work campers and the people who welcome them into their homes. Morning and evening worship are included, as is group reflection time.

The work groups interact with local families as they do home rehab work. Cost per person is \$200.00, which includes food and lodging and covers a small portion of the building materials used. Accommodations at Grace House are in bunk houses — one for males and one for females — each with a bathroom and shower.

Contact Work Camp Director Kate Hannon at katehannon77@yahoo.com to reserve a slot.

# Christmas Day at St. Luke's on Wheeling Island

by The Rev. Theresa Kelley, Rector

Christmas Day 2007 marked the 16th annual Christmas Dinner at St. Luke's in Wheeling, W.Va. The history is a bit selfish in that my husband Jim and I, relative newcomers to the Episcopal Church and to St. Luke's, were not going to celebrate Christmas in the usual family-oriented way 16 years ago because we were too broke (spiritually and financially). We had made it well known that we intended to lock ourselves in our apartment and wait for Christmas to pass over us.

Our priest at the time, the Rev. Curtis Cowell, issued a challenge to us in the form of one donated turkey, telling us to "do something with it." It would have been easier to take it home and eat it. But, he also pointed out that since Christ-

mas was to fall on Sunday that year, there would be no group to serve the free Sunday Lunch that many folks on Wheeling Island, located in the middle of the Ohio Riv-



Sue Mirandy (center) with her son, Tim, and grandson, Timmy, enjoyed the holiday meal.

er between Wheeling and the Ohio shore, depend on for their own daily meal. The rest, as they say, is history. (And good fodder for a book!)

This year we provided a traditional holiday fare with over 200 meals served. We also asked Santa — the Rev. Jim Kelley (yes, he's now an ordained Deacon, and I am a priest, and we both serve at St. Luke's) has Santa's personal cell phone number — to make one more stop for a dozen children. Volunteers came from all over the Ohio Valley, including folk from St. Matthew's, St. Paul's and Lawrencefield Episcopal Church in Wheeling, New Life Methodist, the Community of Christ (two other churches on the Island), and the Vineyard Church. A generous supply of toys was gathered by



Frank McDonnell, better known as Santa, had the best role of the day.

Photos by Amy McDonnell

the Rev. John Brandenburg of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Martins Ferry, Ohio. Numerous monetary gifts from the community helped make this day special in so many different ways.

## Southern Ohio churches help working poor close gap

... continued from page 1

the annual budgets of working families. Most of the money is federal, a welcome stimulus to hard-hit local economies. These programs are a key part of the welfare reform strategy passed by Congress in 1997: they are designed to close the gap between wages and the cost of living.

Ohio has lost over 200,000 manufacturing jobs in the last seven years. The loss of living-wage jobs is particularly severe

in the Appalachian regions of the state. Poverty in Southeast Ohio rose from 28% in 2005 to 32% last year.

### Emergency appeal from food bank

This has led to a huge increase in need for emergency food at a time when the supply of USDA and donated commodities in the state's food banks has fallen disastrously. The Second Harvest Foodbank supplying Southeast

Ohio has such a critical shortage that the Columbus Foundation issued an emergency appeal to donors in early February in an attempt to raise \$750,000. The rural counties simply do not have the financial reserves to fill the rising need.

Tax credits and food stamps are a great solution. Unfortunately, many Ohioans don't know they qualify or hesitate to apply. The Governor's Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives estimates that Ohioans are failing to claim over \$1.3 billion in tax credits and public benefits. This problem may be particularly acute in parts of rural Ohio, where cultural reluctance to go "on the dole" may combine with other barriers to inhibit people from participating, according to Jessica May, the Ohio Benefit Bank's southeast regional coordinator.

### Federal resources have larger impact

Most Episcopal churches in Southern Ohio offer free food or other emergency assistance, and the number of people turning to local congregations for aid has been rising every year. ECSF currently provides grants to 45 different parish-based outreach ministries, the majority serving rural or urban Appalachian communities. Federal resources like the Earned Income Tax Credit can have an impact far beyond the monthly bag of groceries or the once-a-year utility voucher which small churches can provide to a family in need.

In the first tax season the Benefit Bank was live in Ohio, volunteers completed 49 tax returns which yielded over \$62,000 for taxpayers — more than the entire ECSF grants budget the year before. In the last 18 months, Ohio Benefit Bank sites have helped over 8,000 people connect with tax credits and public benefits worth up to \$9 million.

The project has also vastly increased the collaboration of Episcopal churches with the state's safety net, from state and county government to other service providers. The DuPont grant to ECSF helped provide matching funds for a new VISTA team which OASFH sent to each of its regional food banks to engage its member agencies in offering this new service. The project partners have organized productive discussions with state and county government to find ways to reduce the bureaucratic hurdles that deter people from applying for food stamps or Medicaid.

### Bank counselors help win state aid

In spring 2007, Ohio Governor Ted Strickland adopted the Benefit Bank as a key element of his strategy to revitalize the Ohio economy. The testimony of Episcopal Benefit Bank counselors helped win a new Ohio Benefit Bank line item in the state budget to expand training, outreach, site support, and software updates. This January, the Ohio Second Harvest VISTA team was named one of the ten top VISTA programs in the nation.

If you would like to learn more about the Benefit Bank, about other states where it is currently available, or the implementation strategy developed in Ohio, put "Ohio Benefit Bank" in your Web browser, visit the national Benefit Bank website at [www.thebenefitbank.com](http://www.thebenefitbank.com), or contact ECSF's Ariel Miller at [ecsfs@eos.net](mailto:ecsfs@eos.net).



## Prayer Calendar

### A Prayer for Appalachian Ministry

(Written by The Rev. T. Scott Allen)

Gracious Creator God, we thank you for the rich texture of our land — for the hollows, rivers, tree-covered mountains and rolling hills. We bring before you those who, for reasons of injustice, cannot share in the riches and bounty you provide in these hills. Send your Spirit to nourish, strengthen and guide us to be helpful companions with those who thirst for righteousness, justice and peace. Where we can find the way, with whom we can make a difference, we seek your guidance. All this we ask through Jesus, on whom your Spirit rested in all power to proclaim release to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. And in all that is before us, help us to remember that *this* is the year of the Lord's favor. *AMEN.*

PLEASE REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING IN THIS CYCLE OF PRAYER:

March 9	The Diocese of Southwestern Virginia
March 16	The Diocese of East Tennessee and its Appalachian Ministry Resource Task Force
March 23	Thanksgiving for the Resurrection of Jesus
March 30	Those who work for justice and peace
April 6	The Diocese of Southern Ohio
April 13	All who pray for and contribute to the ministry of EAM
April 20	The EAM Board, meeting this week
April 27	The Diocese of Bethlehem and its Social Concerns Committee
May 4	The Diocese of West Virginia
May 11	The women of Appalachia, who have had such an impact on its culture and history
May 18	The Diocese of Maryland
May 25	The people of Appalachia, especially those who are unemployed or underemployed
June 1	The Diocese of Central Pennsylvania
June 8	The staff and host of this summer's work camps
June 15	The Anglican Communion

# 2007 WORK CAMP EXPERIENCE: further testimonials

Included in this issue of Mountain Echoes are two work camp stories that did not make it into the fall 2007 work camp issue. In addition, there is a short reflection piece by Doug Marshall-Steele, a sort of addendum to his original story, on his summer experience.

## 'Enormous expectations . . . fully realized'

by Guy Hollyday  
Memorial Church, Baltimore, Md.

I enjoy life most when I am busy, busy helping others, busy in a group helping others, busy in a group helping others and engaging in religious and spiritual ceremonies in beautiful Appalachia with all the delicious food you can eat, ending on a Friday evening with spiritual mountain-music. Well, that describes Episcopal Appalachian Ministry to a "T".

This year the "team" I was on put up siding (T-111, I think it's called) on the back side of Mrs. Sizemore's home in Coeburn. The back side is backed up so close to the hillside that I could climb up there and take photos down on the roof where the others were working. It also gave me a special view of those giant coal trucks that rumbled by every two or three minutes. Mrs. Sizemore says they start up at 1A.M.!

We had two leaders on our team. Corey, bubbly and garrulous as shook-up champagne, knew Mrs. Sizemore and her great-grandson Caleb from a previous year. Corey loves music. When we saw a road-

sign, "Doctor Stanley Highway," he exclaimed, "That's the creator of Blue Grass!" So, off we went to find the man's house, where Corey . . . but that's a story for another time!

The other person experienced in repairs and equally responsible for the good job we did was Earl, a priest from Delaware. Earl led us in prayers each evening. And it was he who wrote our lunchtime readings —



Work camps are not all work! Pam Fleming wakes her husband, Guy Hollyday, from the nap in the hammock after a day on the job site.

biographical sketches of courageous Americans: Amelia Bloomer, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Jonathan Daniels.

Except for visits from our over-all work leader, Kate Hannon,

there were just four of us at the site. The fourth person, besides me, was a truly lovely, cheerful teenager named Molly, the daughter of another priest, who was working on a different house. In addition to helping with the hammering, Molly worked with Caleb to make and decorate a frame for the color photograph of us that we presented to Mrs. Sizemore at the end of the week. Mrs. Sizemore had invited us to have lunch with her one day, and you never saw such good home cooking.

I had nurtured enormous expectations for months leading up to the week at Grace House. And as in past years, they were fully realized. I'm already nurturing expectations for next year!

## Summer 2007: Mountaintops and flatlands

by Douglas Marshall-Steele  
St. Paul's, Georgetown, Del.

As a southern Delawarean, I live almost at sea level. Indeed, the highest elevation in my county is, sadly for several reasons, the county landfill.

The mountaintops that we visit each year in southwestern Virginia to work in Episcopal Appalachian Ministries' work camp are not only astounding, they are a metaphor for the mountaintop experience which for me was this year's EAM work camp. That week we worked with other likeminded Episcopalians from various parishes in various dioceses.

We all respected each other and loved each other and even accepted each other's foibles and quirks.

The homeowners to whom we were sent were also respectful of whatever cultural differences we might have displayed, and could not do enough for us. They fed us, gave us drink, presented us with gifts, and told us about the life they lived. We in turn did our very best in repairing their homes and discovered the commonalities we shared with them in our life in Christ.

Too soon that week of mutual respect and love ended. Our work assignments were completed. We had deeply bonded with our host families and our fellow work campers as we lived out our understanding of the Gospel.

Our eight-hour drive home was lengthened by travel delays to ten hours. Finally reaching Georgetown and parting from my fellow St.



— Doug Marshall-Steele —

Paul's work campers, the very first person who spoke to me in Delaware was someone who did not like my driving and felt compelled to tell me so. The next morning at Sunday mass both my spouse and I received a presumably anti-gay snub.

We have left the mountaintop in every sense and are back in the flatlands. There is work to do here, too.



Benefit Bank  
now in four  
EAM dioceses

The Benefit Bank (see "Southern Ohio churches" story at left which begins on Page 1) has now expanded to eight states, which encompass four EAM member dioceses: Central Pennsylvania, Bethlehem, Southern Ohio and Maryland. The free, Web-based software and secure database are maintained by Solutions for Progress in Philadelphia, and are free to participating sites and users.

Spearheaded by the National Council of Churches, Benefit Bank has grown through creative teamwork between churches, non-profits, regional funders, and state and local governments. Ohio now has over 400 participating sites, and over the last 18 months they have connected people with tax refunds and public benefits worth up to \$9 million.

If you live in Pennsylvania, Ohio, or Maryland, you can contact the Benefit Bank to sign up as a church or as an individual volunteer at [jointhenetwork@thebenefitbank.com](mailto:jointhenetwork@thebenefitbank.com). Training is free and takes about 4 hours for taxes and 4 for benefits.

## Christmas 2007: Word from Appalachia

by Douglas Marshall-Steele  
St. Paul's, Georgetown, Del.

It was an overcast, gray day just before Christmas when our mail delivery immediately brightened things up. I recognized the envelope's return address as being that of the couple on whose home we worked last July in Episcopal Appalachian Ministries' work camp. The Christmas card within was a particularly nice one focusing on Jesus in His role with us as Redeemer.

The handwritten note was heartwarming: "Thank you so much for all the hard work. You all were the nicest people we've ever met.... May God always bless you! Love, ...." The other members of my team received similar cards.

I had found opportunity while working on their home in July to discuss with this devout Pentecos-

tal couple matters relating to salvation in Christ, the Christian life, and so on. In all of our conversations I was gratified to know that we were on the same page: demographic or religious differences that might be divisive for some were simply not there for us. Indeed, they lamented the barriers that divide some Christians. (I wish there were more Episcopalians and Anglicans who see it that way.)

It is a grace that our hosts value us as the nicest people they have ever met, but of course it is not us but "it is God Who worketh in [us] both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).



Chris Norton of Grace Church, Keswick, Va., and Doug Marshall-Steele work on repairing windows at a 2007 EAM work camp site.

# Thank You, 2007 Contributors

As always, the EAM staff, Board and volunteers are deeply grateful to all who provided monetary support to EAM in 2007. This year our partners gave extra funding to allow us to do a third week of work camp and to take advantage of the exceptional skills present to do additional projects. A special scholarship fund was set up this year to honor our retiring Executive Coordinator, Sandra Majors Elledge. The list below includes those who contributed to these special appeals and to the general operating budget of EAM.

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Appalachian Ministry Resource Team,  
Diocese of East Tennessee

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## In honor of Bob and Betsy Burgwald's marriage

Steve Russell  
Richard Lieb

## In honor of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia (CORA)

Sara J. Mackie

## In honor of Lois Pruter

Jane Pruter-Scherlis

## In honor of Walter Pruter

Jane Pruter-Scherlis

## In honor of granddaughter Sadie's birthday

John and Charlotte Desaulnier

## In honor of Jane Pruter-Scherlis and Marc Scherlis

Walter and Carol Pruter

## RESOURCES

### APPALACHIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE MARCH 28-30 IN HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA

An unexcelled opportunity to learn about all aspects of Appalachian life and culture. For details, visit [www.appalachianstudies.org](http://www.appalachianstudies.org).

### FIFTH ANNUAL MOUNTAIN GRACE CONFERENCE SEPT. 13 IN ATHENS, OHIO

A one-day conference on Appalachian ministry sponsored by the dioceses of Southern Ohio and West Virginia. Saturday, September 13, at the Community Center, Athens, Ohio. For information or to register, contact Michael Maloney at 513-531-8799 or [meamon@aol.com](mailto:meamon@aol.com). Lodging is at The Ohio University Inn 740-589-3705 (or select other local lodging). There is a dinner/community building event at the Inn Friday evening for those who want this.

### COMPUTER AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAM OFFERED FOR SMALL CONGREGATIONS JUNE 18-20 IN LAS VEGAS

From Jane Helmer, Editor, Rural Ministries Network newsletter, *Crossroads*:

Rural Ministries Network announces the first computer awareness/skills training workshop June 18-20 at the Alexis Park Resort in Las Vegas, Nev.

In a program designed to teach or enhance computer and internet skills for small congregations' use, we plan to train six or seven teams of three to four people from dioceses with isolated, small congregations. It is suggested that at least one person in each group be somewhat computer savvy—in order to become a teacher for others in his or her area, one a ministry developer (or the equivalent), and one or two clergy or lay people.

A number of participants may have had no opportunity or need to use computers in their

work or at home. The training is aimed at helping them replace inexperience with computer-ease. Participants will learn to find valuable on-line church resources, and to communicate at will throughout diocese and church. A computer trainer has been retained for this program, and further individual assistance will be with volunteer, computer-experienced church-people.

A Roanridge Fund grant will pay housing, food, and on-site computer and tuition for 20-25 participants. Additional funds may be available to help with purchase of a new or used laptop for some participants' congregations.

The training will be held immediately following the June board meeting of Rural Ministries Network.

For more information, please contact the Rev. Stephen Cuff between 6PM-10PM (Eastern Time) at 513-899-2285 or [cuffs@hotmail.com](mailto:cuffs@hotmail.com).

## MOUNTAIN ECHOES

is the newsletter of the Episcopal Appalachian Ministries. It is published to affirm and support ministry with Appalachians in both urban and rural settings and to inform the Church at large about the social and economic issues that affect Appalachia.

Your letters to the editor are always welcome, as are pictures and suggestions for stories. Submission deadline for the next issue is May 1.

SANDRA MAJORS ELLEDGE  
EDITOR

I want to be part of the Episcopal Church mission and ministry in Appalachia.

Enclosed is my gift:

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I pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to Episcopal Appalachian Ministries to be paid in \_\_\_\_\_ monthly, \_\_\_\_\_ quarterly, \_\_\_\_\_ annual payments.

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