



Johnson City: Children revel in an after-school program at Unicoi United Methodist Church.

Holston Hispanic

Ministries Receive \$50,000 Grant From National Office

Signaling that Hispanic ministries in Holston are vital missions deserving of national funds, the General Board of Global Ministries has awarded \$50,000 in grant money to the Holston Conference.

Ongoing Hispanic ministries in the Wytheville, Johnson City, Chattanooga and Maryville Districts will receive funds over the next three years, according to the denomination's Hispanic American ministries office based in New York. The first half, \$25,000, will be paid out in 2002.

According to the Rev. Ty Harrison, chair of the conference's Hispanic Ministry Team, the \$50,000 grant is designated for staff and programming in burgeoning ministries from First Pulaski UMC in the Wytheville District, to the Prince of Peace congregation at St. Andrews UMC in Chattanooga.

"We're looking forward to ministering to a growing community in the Holston Conference," said Harrison, pastor at Kodak UMC, Knoxville District.

To qualify for the grant, the Holston Annual Conference approved \$50,000 in matching funds for Hispanic ministries in its 2002 budget, Harrison said. Updates on where these funds are being used:

■ **Wytheville:** After chartering the conference's first Hispanic church in December 2001, the Wytheville District is anticipating a groundbreaking on the newly named Door of Heaven United Methodist Church (*De La Iglesia Puerta Del Cielo Metodista Unida*) later this year. Currently based at West Galax UMC, Door of Heaven's 30 charter members combined with participants in a worship service previously existing at

nearby First Independence UMC. Led by the Rev. Arturo Reyna, Door of Heaven has been assisted by First Galax UMC with the use of a parsonage and a \$12,000 building loan.

At First Pulaski UMC, part-time lay pastor Javier Hernandez has been working for more than a year to serve participants in a Sunday-

afternoon worship service as well as weekly Bible studies and English-as-Second-Language (ESL) classes. According to First Pulaski pastor Rev. Randy Frye, the church ministers to a total of about 35 Hispanics in the community, frequently joining with the Galax group for Christmas parties and other events.

Chattanooga: A soccer team for Guatemalan girls provides fellowship and activity for pre-adolescents during a vulnerable time, says the Rev. Mike Feely — "a time when they hit that 'glass ceiling' and sex and pregnancy may seem like their only options."



2002 Photo by Annette Bender, The Call

five-star churches:

Kingsport congregations reach for the heavens

What does it take to be a Five-Star Church in the Holston Conference? Go ask somebody in the Kingsport District.

Of 385 total churches in Holston qualifying as the most missions-oriented congregations of 2001, Kingsport had the highest percentage of all 12 districts. Forty-four of Kingsport's 59 congregations — 75 percent — received a Five-Star rating by the end of last year.

Second were the Big Stone Gap and Morristown Districts, tying with 51 percent of their churches qualifying for the honor. Tazewell was third with 44 percent, followed by Maryville with 41 percent and Johnson City with 39 percent.

Conference-wide, an average 42 percent of all 935 congregations achieved Five-Star status. To qualify, Holston churches must pay their apportionments in full and give any amount of money to each of these four Advance Special categories: International, United States, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), and Conference-Initiated Specials.

Established by the conference Missions Team, the Five-Star program provides recognition for churches to give to Advance Special missions, such as the Ishe Anesu project in Zimbabwe or Holston Hispanic ministries.

The Rev. Grady Winegar, Kingsport superintendent, said his district actually set a goal of 100 percent participation in the Five-Star club. Ministers were encouraged to meet the goal during district meetings, charge conferences, and through the district newsletter.

"We're delighted that our people are responding to the full scope of what missions accomplish — in our conference, country, overseas, and through very special emergency ministries by UMCOR," Winegar said.

Five-Star Churches for 2001 will be recognized at Annual Conference in June.

'Charity at Home,' continued from page 1



■ The Bethlehem Center

featuring these agencies that all of the Holston members will learn of the enormous impact they are having on people's lives," Hall said.

This month, district offices will receive information about hands-on mission kits for collecting prior to Annual Conference, Daugherty said.

Districts in the northern part of the conference -- Kingsport, Johnson City, Abingdon, Big Stone Gap, Tazewell, Wytheville -- will stock teacher supply kits for Liberia. Designated for 1,200 teachers in 120 different schools, the kits will include items such as chalk, calculators, notebooks and deodorant.

Districts in the southern part of the conference will collect clothing, food or medical supplies for the Ishe Anesu project in Zimbabwe. Oak Ridge and Morristown will gather items such as cough syrup, bandages and toothbrushes. Knoxville and Maryville will load buckets with powdered milk, rice, dried beans and other cooking supplies. Cleveland will collect boys' clothes, while Chattanooga will collect girls' clothes.

Each district will have a central location where local churches may drop off their assigned kits. On June 7, conference leaders will collect all goods and transport them to Annual Conference in North Carolina before shipping them overseas.

A 20-minute video promoting the seven in-conference agencies will soon be available to district offices for viewing by local church members, Daugherty said.

"We're trying to share with families in our region what we've been sharing with people in other countries over the last few years," he said. ■

Wytheville:

Facing camera, left to right: The Revs. Arturo Reyna, Ty Harrison, Joe Carrico, and District Superintendent J.N. Howard lead a chartering service for Door of Heaven UMC.



■ **Johnson City:** Last fall, Unicoi UMC announced the opening of a new 15,800-square foot building that would be used to foster Hispanic ministries. In the last two months, Unicoi has become a gold mine of activity, with the start of a Hispanic praise time for about 16 participants, a Sunday school class for six children, an ESL class for eight, and a Spanish class for veteran church members who want to communicate with new residents in the community. Also new to Unicoi is a bilingual couple, Nadia Gamboa and Aurelio Ocon, who are working in these new ministries.

"This has all happened since the first of the year," says the Rev. Jim Goddard, Unicoi pastor. "It's mind-blowing to me." Also in the works is a weeknight Bible study in Spanish, an Alcoholics Anonymous group, and a *Cinco de Mayo* event when many Spanish-speaking migrant workers return to the area this spring. "The Hispanic ministry in Unicoi is getting ready to explode," said Harrison.

■ **Chattanooga:** Having tutored a hub group of about 90 Hispanic students at Eastside Elementary since September 2000, Chattanooga churches are developing new ministries for the families and children with whom they've developed relationships. Led by the Rev. Mike Feely, a Brainerd UMC pastor with a passion for Hispanic ministry, Chattanooga volunteers have done everything from repairing bathtubs to rescuing a kidnapped child to organizing a soccer team for pre-adolescent girls. At St. Andrews UMC, former Holston Conference camp worker Samuel Gutierrez has been leading a Sunday afternoon worship service since August 2001, as well as conducting services in the homes of people who cannot attend on Sunday due to work schedules. Also in the works is a children's ministry for Gutierrez's group, known as the Prince of Peace congregation. In addition to Brainerd, other Chattanooga groups contributing funds, volunteers, vans and facilities include East Ridge, First-Centenary, Hixson, Christ, Simpson, Lighthouse, Camp Lookout, and the district's United Methodist Women.

■ **Maryville:** For three years, volunteers from Fairview, First Loudon and First Madisonville churches have ministered to a hub group of about 150 Hispanics living in a Vonore, Tenn., mobile-home park. Bible study groups, vacation bible school, language classes, and an annual Christmas party allow Maryville members to develop relationships with the newcomers, according to the Rev. Jerry Russell. Yet, ministries have been limited because they must be conducted in homes or outdoors during good weather. It remains the Maryville District's goal to secure an out building for the community to meet and worship, said Russell, senior pastor at Fairview UMC.

■ **Morristown:** Holston's most recent venture into Hispanic ministries is happening in the Morristown area, where church leaders are acutely aware of a growing Spanish-speaking population. The district Discipleship Team recently appointed a ministry development team headed by the Rev. Jay Ferguson, pastor at Liberty Hill UMC. The Rev. Richard Patterson, Morristown district superintendent, said he was "excited" about the possibilities. ■