

district roundup:

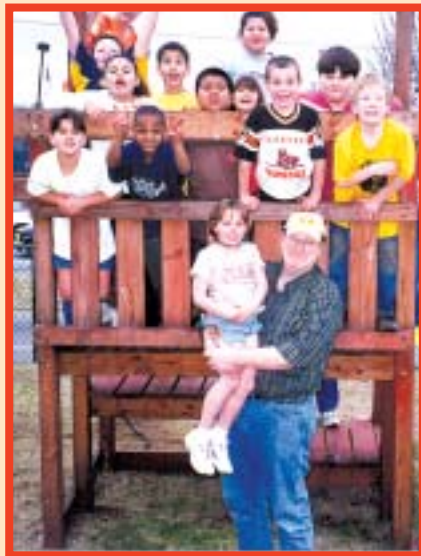
News from the Holston Conference's 12 Districts



▲ **JOHNSON CITY:**
The Wesley Foundation "roofs it" on a former mission trip to South Carolina.

Abingdon:

State Street UMC recently hired a consultant to evaluate the church for "sustainable growth." They found that 218 additional parking spaces are needed to help the church offset a 13-year decline in membership and attendance. Other recommendations, as reported in a recent newsletter: Designate 20 guest parking spaces, and hire a uniformed, off-duty police officer for street crossing on Sunday mornings. "The recommendations are currently being studied by the appropriate committees," State Street reports. **L**



▲ **MORRISTOWN:**
Stephen Burkhart and the kids are alright.

Big Stone Gap:

For six years, First Pennington Gap UMC has provided a free Thursday night meal with devotions and prayer for children and adults in the community. The outreach idea grew out of a Disciple Bible study class, according to the Rev. Kenneth Sprinkle. About 12 parishioners keep the ministry going, serving about 35-40 each week. "For the most part, they don't come to Sunday school or worship," Sprinkle said. "But they come on Thursdays, and they see this as their own church." **M**

Chattanooga:

Youth at Grace UMC are converting a barn on the property into "a place where teens can go to worship God, do homework, or just hang out." Splatter paint and murals are just part of the hands-on decorating planned by the young people, who are spending their Saturdays between now and summer to create a youth haven. The group includes about 16 active members, says parent and leader Sharon Loftis. **M**



Photo by Wayne Quesenberry

▲ **WYTHEVILLE:** *The Bishop's father-in-law has a new home.*

Cleveland:

Feel awkward about going to the altar to pray on Sunday morning? So did a member at Daisy UMC; she suggested a "prayer chest" to make the trip easier. Each week, the chest — basically, a jewelry box located atop the baptismal font — contains paper strips with prayer requests. The requests might be for church leaders, ministries, or for people who need healing. "It changes from week to week," says the Rev. Mark Clark. The prayer chest not only gives people incentive to come to altar, it helps those with burdens on their hearts to feel less conspicuous. **M**



▲ **CLEVELAND:** *Daisy members find a cure for "altar awkwardness."*

Johnson City:

The Wesley Foundation at ETSU is having a good year, with 34 signed up for a biannual mission trip to a South Carolina United Methodist relief center in May. Students are also sponsoring two needy children to summer camp at Buffalo Mountain and recently raised more than \$250 for the conference disaster relief fund, reports Administrative Assistant Keitha Cross.

Kingsport:

Crossroads and Mafair UMC are partnering with Wellmont Medical Center to establish an Intensive Prayer Unit (IPU). Patients may participate by providing their first names and brief information about prayer needs. The information is then distributed to congregations for ongoing prayer. Church members receive updates about the patients' medical conditions and changes in prayer intentions. Modeled at Johns Hopkins Medical Center, IPU can lead to healing and "positive mood changes," according to Wellmont. **L**

Knoxville:

After years of trying to find candidates for a 26-year-old scholarship fund, a Sunday school class at Church Street UMC has designated Hiwassee College as the manager of the scholarship's endowment fund. "The average family income of a typical student at Hiwassee is well below state and national averages," according to a press release from the Murphy Builders class. The fund, in the amount of \$32,983, "would make a tremendous impact on students with financial need." This year's recipient is pre-ministerial major Elizabeth Medley, a freshman from Jasper, Tenn. **L**

Maryville:

Hope Bruce of Broadway UMC will join 33 nurses, physicians, translators and others on a mission trip to Mexico April 30-May 6. Broadway's choir is hosting a "Mexico Luncheon" on April 14 to raise money for Bruce's trip expenses. **L**

Morristown:

Three months after his heart attack, the Rev. Stephen Burkhart has a clean bill of health and is back on the job at George Street and Grant's Chapel. He's also 15 pounds lighter and working six days a week instead of 24/7. "My heart attack was caused by arrogance — never taking time off or shutting down for a rest," says the minister, whose churches won the Mustard Seed Award for small congregations last year. During recuperation, he had to kneel to hug the church children. Now that he's stronger, the kids are back in his arms. **S**

Oak Ridge:

Based out of First Farragut UMC, the "Hams for the Hungry" boy just completed his fourth annual campaign to put pork on the tables of needy people for Easter. Seventh-grader Matthew LeSage spoke at local churches and civic organizations to raise \$16,391 for Second Harvest. The funds purchased 3,000 hams for distribution to the hungry over the holidays.

Tazewell:

Belfast UMC recently sent 300 Igniting Ministry postcards to residents in the community, inviting them to worship during Holy Week. The church also had special welcome cards printed up for guests, providing information about services and classes, according to the Rev. Carol Ferguson. **S**

Wytheville:

Asbury Center's assisted living section at Birdmont has a new resident. The Rev. Russell Gunsalus, 95, is a retired Evangelical United Brethren minister and the father-in-law of Holston Bishop Ray Chamberlain. Recently interviewed by the *Southwest Virginia Enterprise*, Gunsalus said he likes his new pad. "This is the nicest retirement center I've ever been in with no exception, and I've been in a lot of them through my ministry." **R**