



15th Anniversary
Edition!

NOTEABLES

ABLE Families

February 2010 Volume 15 Issue 1

Celebrating 15 years fighting poverty in Mingo County

ABLE Families was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Wheeling, WV, in March, 1994. In September of that same year, Sr. Janet Peterworth, OSU, was hired to bring ABLE Families' mission statement to life. And then in February of 1995, ABLE opened its doors. The rest is history! With gratitude to God and our generous supporters, we will mark fifteen years of work in Mingo County with a **special celebration on February 19, 2010.**

The event will take place from **3:00 to 6:00 pm in the ABLE Families Afterschool building, with the program beginning at 5:00.** Expected to be present are representatives from state, county, and local government, agencies and organizations with which we have collaborated over the years, past and present employees and board members, and many other friends of the agency.

We invite you to join us for this special celebration. If you can't be here, we ask for your continued prayers and thank you for your support over the years. Our work on behalf of justice and development in Mingo County goes on!

ABLE Families Receives Several Important Grant Awards

ABLE Families is pleased to announce it has received four important grants in recent weeks.

The Logan Healthcare Foundation has awarded ABLE Families a grant of \$23,000 to help support our Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker (MIHOW) program. Our in-home educators offer resources, information, and mentoring related to prenatal health, nutrition, childhood diseases, and much more. The LHC funds will allow us to reach two areas of the region that the MIHOW program had not reached before last year.

The West Virginia Development Office has awarded ABLE Families a grant of \$8,838. The money will fund several important training and conference experiences
(continued on page 2)



A WSAZ NewsChannel3 reporter presents the Hometown Heroes citation to Sr. Janet Peterworth and Sr. Brendan Conlon at a special Dec. 4 reception.

ABLE Founder Honored by Mingo County and Charleston TV Station

The Mingo County Commissioners proclaimed **December 4, 2009, to be 'Sisters Day' in the county**, in honor of recently retired ABLE Families director Sr. Janet and Sr. Brendan Conlon, retiring director of Christian Help. The commissioners presented a check for \$1,000 to ABLE Families and another check for \$1,000 to Christian Help, in appreciation for the work both agencies have done for the past 15 years on behalf of the poor in Mingo County.

Both Sisters were also honored by the Charleston television station WSAZ NewsChannel3, which **named the two 'Hometown Heroes.'** The segment aired December 18, during the station's 5:30 pm news broadcast.

The Sisters were nominated for the honor by staff of the Mingo County Department of Health and Human Resources, a longtime collaborator with both agencies.

A Note from the Director



With each passing day as director, I'm more convinced that the work for justice and development that ABLF Families carries out is vitally important to Mingo County and its people, here in the heart of Appalachia.

Filling Sr. Janet Peterworth's shoes is a daunting task. Celebrating ABLF's fifteenth anniversary means, for me, gratitude for the work that she and many, many employees, volunteers, and supporters have accomplished with this agency. Thousands of Mingo County people have benefited from its services, finding confidence, knowledge, and resources to help step out of the cycle of poverty.

- Children have learned the joys of learning, reading, exploring, and keeping active.
- Mothers have developed a better understanding of how to nurture and care for their newborns.
- They have been given time to relax, reflect, and refuel along the tough road of parenting.
- Women have learned to protect them-

selves and thrive.

- Families have grown stronger, healthier, better equipped to face the world and engage with it.
- Parents have learned to feed their families more nutritiously and economically.
- Adults have made themselves better candidates in the job market by getting GEDs, computer training, and much more.

As I begin my sixth month as director of ABLF Families, I take none of this for granted. I know that I couldn't think big about the future without Sr. Janet's thinking big from the start, when there was nothing here but her and her mission statement in hand.

The ABLF board of directors has committed itself to an intensive strategic planning process in the months ahead. That thrills me, because there is every indication that it will not be an obligatory, bureaucratic, going-through-the-motions process, but a time of fruitful planning, creating, and building. Sr. Pat and I are ready with our own ideas, too, some of which we've already begun to implement.

Barry

Another ABLF Success Story

Congratulations to Will Ausmus, who was recently awarded his General Equivalency Diploma (GED)! Will prepared for the GED exam with the help of ABLF Families adult education tutor Shannon Hoffman. We are proud of him and wish him much success in the future.

New Grant Awards

(continued from page 1)

ences for our in-home educators, and also help pay the salary of our MIHOW coordinator.

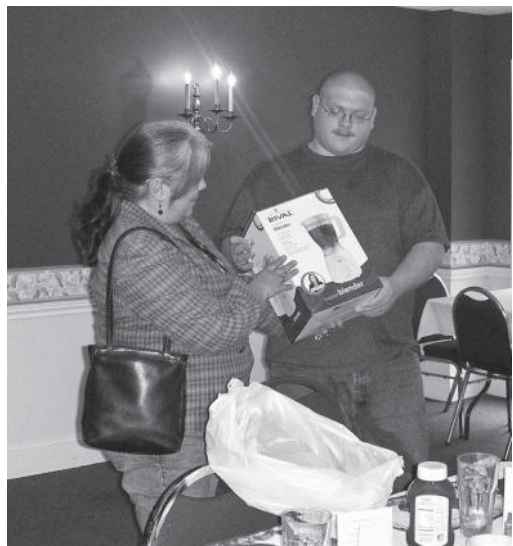
The West Virginia Humanities Council has awarded us a grant of \$1,500 to support a new initiative called Authors After-school. ABLF Families will host visits by three prominent children's authors to the students of the After-school program. These authors will talk with the children about being a writer and guide them in mini writer's workshops. Every student will receive a copy of a book by each of the three authors on the occasion of their three visits. The authors who will visit are Marc Harshman, Anna Egan Smucker, and Cheryl Ware.

The Five Promises for Children Foundation has awarded \$3,000 to the ABLF Families Afterschool program. The new foundation was established by Gov. Joe Manchin III to support agencies which offer West Virginia young people resources to grow into caring, productive citizens. We're proud to be **among the very first agencies** to receive funding from it.

Local parents learn about good nutrition, good cooking

The latest installment of our 7-week Supper in a Sack nutrition education program recently wrapped up. Six participants went through the program, which is the standard size of an SIS "class." This time around, one of them was a male, a local dad; that doesn't often happen.

Throughout the seven weeks, the group learned about nutrition, meal planning, grocery budgeting, and other life skills (like self-esteem and conflict management). They learned to cook a variety of meals that are healthy, inexpensive, easy to prepare and tasty. Meals in this cycle included meatloaf made with half ground beef and half turkey, vegetable soup, stir fry, and casseroles.



At the closing banquet for the most recent Supper in a Sack program, coordinator Garnet Fitchpatrick presents program participant Chris with a new blender as a gift.

Briefly

Good Press

ABLE Families was featured prominently in a recent front-page article in the *State Journal*, a Charleston newspaper. The article, called "Finding Hope Amid the Chains of Poverty," pointed to us as one of three nonprofits doing important work on behalf of the poor in West Virginia. Stop by the ABLÉ Families blog (www.ablefamilies.wordpress.com) to find a link to the article.

A 'Joy'ful Gift

Our Lady of Joy Parish in Pittsburgh, PA, recently made possible the purchase of a new set of tires for the ABLÉ Families mini school bus. The parish donated the bus to us a few years ago. This time around, they've also donated a generous selection of spare parts. Many thanks, Our Lady of Joy!

MIHOW Trainings

Our in-home family educators have been very busy strengthening their skills and adding to their knowledge with several recent trainings and conferences. They have participated in the regional Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker (MIHOW) conference in Weston, WV; the Growing Healthy Children conference in Charleston; and the Share the Vision conference in Charleston. At the latter conference, they gained valuable knowledge about supporting families who are struggling with addiction.

A Note from Sr. Patricia Ann Murray, Program Director



I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. Most people call me Sr. Pat. I grew up in Berwyn, a suburb of Chicago, as the youngest of four children. I lived in the Chicago area until I entered religious life at 35.

I am a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, based in Frankfort, another Chicago suburb. I've spent the majority of my religious life in Fort Wayne, Indiana. There I served as a pastoral associate, college campus minister, and director of religious education. It was as a campus minister that I first came to Kermit and to ABLÉ Families. I brought a group of college students down to Kermit for two consecutive spring breaks and was very impressed by the work being done here by Sr. Janet.

I had entered religious life with the desire to work directly with the poor, and after my initial formation period, I was given permission to find a way to pursue that dream. I contacted Sr. Janet in an email asking her to mentor me in starting a new ministry in the Chicago or Fort Wayne areas. What I got from her instead was a reply that

said simply "We need to talk."

On the telephone, she explained to me that she and Sr. Brendan of Christian Help had both been thinking about retirement, but they were looking for people to continue their work in Mingo County. I knew then that God was calling me to come to Kermit.

I am excited about the possibilities of what I can bring to continue growing ABLÉ Families. Prior to entering religious life, I spent 15 years as a computer systems analyst. So among many hopes and plans, I hope to be able to use my background to teach computer skills to the people of Mingo County. I'd love to see a program through which people who have prepared for their GED exams with us continue on to get an associate degree through online courses they take here at our computer lab. A college degree is difficult for people who are 45 minutes away from the nearest college, or who have only dial-up internet access or lack familiarity with computers.

I look forward to working with all of you to make dreams come true here in Mingo County. May God bless you abundantly for your support of ABLÉ Families.

Regis U. students visit, teach, learn at ABLÉ Families

Nursing students from Regis University in Denver, Colorado, visited ABLÉ Families for an immersion service learning experience, December 8 through 11, 2009.

The Regis nursing program emphasizes developing nurses who take care of the whole person, not just help treat a condition. And so they came here to look at the health issues that are faced by the people of central Appalachia, and to get to know the people themselves. It was an extraordinary week for all of us.

Their time with us included a driving tour of Mingo County; a day-long training session for our MIHOW in-home educators on pre- and post-natal care, along with a rich exchange of ideas and experiences; and a presentation by Bill Richardson of WVU Extension program, on Appalachian culture, history, and economy; and much more.

'Thank you, Sister Janet!'



ABLE Families Afterschool students shared a moment of appreciation and gratitude with Sister Janet as she approached her retirement.

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15th Anniversary Edition!!



Mikayla, a student of ABLE Families' Afterschool program, is interviewed by a WSAZ NewsChannel3 reporter, at a reception where Sr. Janet was named a Hometown Hero by the station. (See article, page 1.)

For regular ABLE updates, as well as new information about literacy, maternal and infant health, poverty and justice in Mingo County, and more, visit the *new* ABLE Families Blog:

www.ablefamilies.wordpress.com

It's updated several times each week.

A big thank you for 15 years of support!

The fact is, some nonprofits that were struggling before the recession are now closing their doors, and many others are being forced to reduce services and programs and cut hours and staff — at a time when many people need them more than ever!

To be sure, donations were down a bit at ABLE Families in 2009, and we've been very careful about spending.

But the generous support that we have continued to receive (coupled with past support that has provided for a savings account for lean times) has meant that during the economic downturn, **we have never for a moment had to**

*Thank
you*

think about cutting programs, activities, or staff; our programs are thriving; and we're able to continue looking at ways we can or should grow and develop.

As we celebrate our 15th anniversary, we offer a **huge and heartfelt THANK YOU** to everyone who has ever donated money, resources, or time in partnership with us and the work we do. We promise to continue to be faithful stewards of all that we're given.