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“Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind.” - Calvin Coolidge



Special guest and child advocate, Tim White, reads to students at ABLE Families' Oct. 22 Lights on Afterschool event.

Keeping the Afterschool Hours Productive

We are glad to report that ABLE Families' tenth year of providing afterschool programming is going great! And it is due, in no small part, to the amazing team that coordinates and facilitates the daily activities.

Soon after his arrival, our new VISTA, Stefan Barber, went to work recruiting students at Kermit K-8. His hands-on approach to recruitment yielded the most applications our office has ever received. We are now providing services to 22-26 students per day.

The increase in students coincided with our afterschool program coordinator, Jenta Cheung, taking maternity leave. Therefore, we promoted Gail Muncy to the position and hired Corbin Damron as our newest afterschool facilitator. We look forward to Jenta's return in the spring, and wish her the best of luck with her

expected baby.

The students have taken part in some exciting activities this year. In addition to the daily enrichment activities, homework help, and social skill-building, our students have taken field trips to a local farm for hayrides in October and a theater performance of *Peter Pan* in November.

The students have also benefited from our partnerships with the Clay Foundation and the S.T.O.P. Coalition. The Clay Foundation has funded weekly singing and dulcimer lessons, and the S.T.O.P. Coalition provides monthly programming on the health risks of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

In the months ahead, students will take part in activities to build cultural awareness and tolerance of differences among people.



NOTEABLES

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Appalachia —a Place to Learn Values

Editor's note: For several issues we have run information about the Appalachian region. It seems fitting to end this series with the important reflections below.

Values. They are the things that govern our lives. They are the grist in our decision-making mill. Values held in common shape a whole culture and a whole people. And so it is with the people of Appalachia. A recent publication outlined ten values that seem to shape folks who live in and love these mountains. It has been my privilege to serve here for 15 years. I only hope I have absorbed some of these values.



The small town of Kermit, W.Va.

Individualism, Self Reliance, and Pride. These show up in an attitude of wanting to do things for yourself and of not wanting to be beholden to others.

Religion. This gives value and meaning to life. Appalachians believe things happen for a reason and that a Higher Power, something bigger than they are, controls their lives. They name that higher power God.

Neighborliness and Hospitality. Folks in this region are always willing to help each other out. They will go the extra mile for their neighbor who is hurting. However, they tend to be suspicious of strangers. Outsiders have to earn their trust.

Family Solidarity. Appalachians are family centered. This is not just the immediate family, but the extended family as well. “Blood is thicker than water” is an important truism here. The hierarchy of values is God, family, and country for most Appalachians.

Getting Along. Appalachians will go to great lengths to keep from offending others. Getting along is more important than letting your feelings be known.

Love of place. Don't ever forget “back home,” and go there as often as possible. Often Appalachians will stay in places that seem to others to hold no hope for maintaining a decent life.

Humility and Being Yourself. Folks from Appalachia don't believe you should put on airs or pretend to be something you are not. It is not seen as virtue to “get above your raising.”

Sense of Beauty. This is seen in the folksongs, poems, and arts and crafts of the region. It is also seen in the colorful language that is used in the region.

Sense of Humor. People of Appalachia are quick to laugh at themselves, but don't appreciate being laughed at.

Patriotism. This goes back to the Civil War. Flags, land, and relationships are important. This can be seen in community celebrations and festivals.

As I leave Appalachia, I am thankful for the opportunity to have lived among such warm and loving people. I have seen these virtues in practice, and I know how important they are to the people of this region. Thank goodness these virtues are still practiced somewhere.

For regular information about what's happening at ABLE Families, check out the new ABLE Families Blog:

www.ablefamilies.wordpress.com

A Note from the Director

Well, it is not January yet, and I am still here. I just wanted one more time to share my thoughts with you.

As you can imagine, we have been in transition since last we talked. Our new Director, Barry Hudock, and our new Program Director, Sister Patricia Ann Murray, hit the ground running. It has been good to be able to orient them to all of the things that go on at ABLE Families.

Transition time often leads to “remembering” time. And I have found myself going back to the beginning of ABLE Families in 1994 when it was only a concept on paper given to me by the Sisters of St. Joseph from Wheeling. In those first weeks and months, I often asked myself “What will ABLE look like?” “How can it be of the best service to the people of Mingo County?” “How can we meet the needs that are here?” I remember how Sr. Brendan and I talked with people to introduce ourselves and to get their input. I remember wondering if ABLE Families was going to need a physical place or if it could be run from a home office.

Then the first people came. “Can you help me get my GED?” “Can you help me prepare for the ACT?” “Do you have computer training?” And our adult education program was launched. Today it is staffed by a volunteer from the Christian Appalachian Project and is stronger than ever.

In January of 1995, ABLE rented a second floor apartment and set up shop with a couple of used computers. Our first home!

And then came Appalread—a family literacy program—and a chance to have AmeriCorps and VISTAs serving out of ABLE. This was a wonderful opportunity! Not only did we expand our services to families, but more importantly we were able to offer service opportunities to people through these federal programs. More than 30 people have served here as Americorps or VISTAs.

It was through Appalread that we got involved with the Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker program out of Vanderbilt University. This program has grown tremendously over the years, and today we serve almost 90 families in the county.

Supper in a Sack was created with a group of Mingo County citizens, and that program has served well over 200 homemakers, helping them prepare nutritious meals while stretching their food dollar.

And it was through our association with Save the Children that our afterschool and summer camp programs started. This year we had almost 50 kids in our camp program and average 23 kids in the afterschool.

Now ABLE has two buildings (both shared with Christian Help) and 14 employees. We’ve come a long way, baby!

Thanks for letting me reminisce, and thanks for your support over the years. It has been a wonderful journey. God bless you, and goodbye for now.

Sr. Janet

4-H Partnership Expands Teen Outreach Services



It is not easy being a teenager in Mingo County. Of course, few of us would characterize our teenage years as “easy.” It’s a time when changing hormones, increasing peer pressures, and the confusions accompanying impending adulthood can lead any youth astray.

But the situation for Tug Valley teens is made more complicated by economic and geographic barriers. With most adults desperate for work, afterschool and summer jobs are hard to find. Additionally, there are no local malls or movie theaters where teens can congregate to spend their evenings and weekends having fun in a safe, secure atmosphere.

In September, our new VISTA, Stefan Barber, partnered with the Mingo County WVU Extension Office to begin chartering a 4-H club at local Tug Valley High School. As we at ABLE Families have found over the years, teens have much to contribute to the local community, but simply lack the opportunities to realize their potential. We expect this expansion of our services will fill that void.

4-H offers teens a constructive medium through which their positive energy can be channeled into action. While the planning process is still underway, our recruitment efforts have reached fourteen high school students who are eager to begin.

Oh, By The Way. . .

Lights on Afterschool! Event a Grand Success

ABLE Families’ fifth annual Lights on Afterschool celebration attracted parents and local politicians to witness our students sing, play the dulcimer, put on a puppet show, and give testimonials to the importance of this program in their lives. Guest speaker Tim White, Program Coordinator for the Weed and Seed Project of Huntington, remarked, “You all should be extremely thankful for the work being done by the staff here at ABLE Families to provide your children with an afterschool program. Not all communities are lucky enough to have programs such as this.”

Donors Strengthen ABLE MIHOW Program

Our Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker (MIHOW) in-home educators have been busy making home visits and completing various trainings to meet the high standards set by Vanderbilt University. The program was recently blessed by donations of incentive gifts for MIHOW participants from Christian Appalachian Project, layettes from Clothe the Naked Now, welcome baby baskets from Appalachian Outreach of Wheeling, and gifts for our Supper in a Sack program participants from St. Paul of the Cross from Columbia City, IN.

Clay Foundation Keeps the Arts Alive in Appalachia

Thanks to a generous donation of tickets from the Clay Foundation, fifteen students of our afterschool program experienced a truly rich arts experience on November 8. They traveled with our staff to Charleston to attend the Charleston Light Opera Guild / Clay Center production of *Peter Pan* live. The students had a great time on this weekend field trip, with many asking if we could return in April for a live production of *The Wizard of Oz*. We thank the Clay Foundation for their generosity.

Looking to the Future

Our New Administrative Team. . .



Barry Hudock and Sister Patricia Ann Murray look over plans for the future.

Meet **Barry Hudock**, the new executive director of both ABLE Families and Christian Help. Under our new structure, he oversees fundraising, grant writing, program development, and administrative duties for both agencies. Barry brings a broad background of education and experience to his new position. He comes to us from Syracuse, New York, where he previously taught theology and counseled youth with behavioral problems. Barry lives in Williamson, WV, with his wife, Toni, and seven children.

Now meet **Sr. Patricia Ann Murray**, ABLE Families’ new Program Director who supervises the daily activities of ABLE’s various programs. Sr. Pat’s first experience with ABLE Families came in 2004, when she organized a spring break work trip to Kermit for students of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. She comes to us from Fort Wayne, Indiana, where she directed religious education for St. Charles Borromeo Parish. Sr. Pat is a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

Our New Support Team. . .

Our adult education program is being revitalized under the leadership of **Molly Lueken**. Molly began coordinating the program in October, offering classes in GED prep, basic literacy, and other areas. She is a graduate of Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and a former teacher in the Florida public school system. Molly and her husband, Kyle, are volunteers with the Christian Appalachian Project. They live in Hagerhill, Kentucky. “I enjoy being in this area,” Molly says, “It has brought my husband and me closer to our families. But more than that, it has shown me the great need for education in this area. I am getting a full schedule of adults who need help. I only hope I can give them what they need.”



A former teen volunteer with our summer camps, **Corbin Damron** joined the staff in October. He works with our afterschool program, offering students enrichment activities, homework help, and social skill-building. Corbin is from the Kermit community and earned an Associate Degree in Education from Southern West Virginia Community & Technical College in Williamson. He and his wife, Emberly, live in Dingess, W.Va., where Corbin serves as both deacon and youth pastor at Mount Hope Freewill Baptist Church. They eagerly await the arrival of their first child.



Stefan Barber is our new VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America). A native of DeGraff, Ohio, he graduated from Ohio University’s Honors Tutorial College in June 2009. Stefan developed an affinity for Appalachia while living in Athens during his college years. At ABLE he works to build the capacity in our programs. He is assisting in fundraising, partnership building, and public relations efforts. He lives in Warfield, Kentucky.



Larry “Mitch” Brewer, ABLE’s new maintenance supervisor, is a resident of Lovely, Kentucky, who came to us through the Kentucky’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. Mitch brings valuable skills and a great attitude to our team. We had not been considering doing any more hiring due to budget constraints, but Mitch made such a positive contribution to the office’s workings that we quickly decided we needed to hire him before someone else did. He will serve both ABLE Families and Christian Help. Mitch lives with his daughter, Sage.



Christmas is Coming



Don’t forget if you are looking for an alternative gift for the person who has everything, you can always give a tax deductible gift to ABLE Families that will keep on giving throughout the year. This gift can give a mom-to-be an extra visit when she needs it. It can assure a child that she will have a safe place to come after school, or maybe it can assist an adult to get his GED.

We’ll send you a card that is a nice stocking stuffer.

And don’t forget that if you shop online, ABLE Families can get a percent of your purchase price if you shop through www.iGive.com. It is so easy. Just go to that web site and tell them that you are shopping for us. Presto! You shop, we win! It really works. We just got a check from them last week.

You can also earn for ABLE by using GoodSearch as your search engine. It is a part of Yahoo. After indicating ABLE Families as your cause of

choice, we get a penny for each time you search with GoodSearch.com. While that does not seem like much, if lots of you do it, well, you know how pennies grow.

And while I am thinking about technology, we want to invite you to tour our newly updated web page. It will bring you up to date on all of the activities that are going on here at ABLE. Be sure to take the time to see our videos and to read our new blog.

Have a blessed Christmas!