

Fall 2002

A Tradition of Service

by Cherry Wunderlich

Pancake Breakfasts....Apple Sales....Christmas Tree Sales. From time to time, when you leave the lower entrance of the Kensington Safeway parking lot and turn right along Armory, you see a sign by a parking lot, announcing a special event. The story of these signs is the story of a longtime community organization.

The volunteers who organize these events belong to a service organization, the United Methodist Men (UMM) of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Kensington. And the hundreds of members of the community who, month after month, enjoy the delicious pancake breakfasts, as well as the hundreds of others who support UMM's other fundraiser benefits, are also helping to support varied charities.

The funds raised through these special events support youth and adult church projects as well as community organizations, including Bethesda Cares, Shepherd's Table, the Children's Inn at NIH, Montgomery Hospice, and Christmas in April. A recent pancake breakfast benefited the Potato Project, a hunger relief project through which volunteers gather potatoes left on the fields by the harvesting machines.

UMM began in October 1948. Its goal: to serve the church and the larger community through activities that would invite and welcome all. It was formed by members of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, which had its first home around 1890, in what is now a residence on St. Paul Street in Kensington. The building along Armory Avenue was built in the 1960's. The pancake breakfasts are a project of UMM and UMW, United Methodist Women, another volunteer group at St. Paul's.

Today, UMM's volunteers include a core group of fifteen to twenty, plus more than thirty other volunteers who donate their time and efforts. Some are still working; the majority are retired. The current president is Harold Moyer. Past presidents going back to the 1950's and 1960's are still active members of the church.
Helping Hands

Helping Hands, one of UMM's projects, gives older and homebound people assistance with simple home repairs and chores. Calls for assistance range from changing a light bulb to replacing a leaky shower hose. The Helping Hands volunteer purchases the light bulb or other supplies needed and fixes the problem at no charge other than the cost of the supplies.
Hobbs House

The small shed standing in the parking lot has a special name with a special story. This miniature barn stores the supplies used for the UMM Apple Sale and Christmas Tree Sale. Jim Hobbs, who passed away in 1997, never became president of UMM. However, members agreed that he was the "spark plug" of the organization, responsible for what it has become. So, the little building was dedicated in his honor and memory.

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All in all, the volunteers experience great joy and pleasure in their service to the church and the community.

(Our thanks to former UMM president Jerry Watkins, who provided materials and shared the story of UMM for this article.)