

November 2011

MOUNTAIN T.O.P.

This newsletter is designed to keep you connected with what is happening on the mountain.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is November and all over Facebook I see friends posting the things in their life that they are thankful for and count as blessings. I was having a particularly bad day in the office and a very good friend stopped me in the middle of my rant and said we should pause and think about all of our blessings. With that theme seeming to be everywhere I look, I thought maybe I would share with you a few things I am thankful for.

First and foremost, I am thankful for all that God has blessed me with in this life and the sacrifice that His Son made for me. I am extremely thankful for my family. They are a true gift from God and the ultimate example of unconditional love and support that is a testament of their own deep faith and trust in God. I am thankful for the call God placed upon my heart to serve and for His desire for me to exercise that call at Mountain T.O.P. I am very thankful for those others that also heard the call to serve in this ministry year-round. They are tireless servants, loving souls and passionate about what they do. They are also good friends and family.

I am thankful for each of the families and individuals that have been placed in our path. Through our service with them, God's grace and love becomes so visible and so real. Through their need and our response to that need, lives are changed and God's vision for this world is fulfilled. I am also thankful for all the volunteers that come to serve in so

many different capacities. Their commitment to being Christ's hands and feet goes so far in bringing restoration to the kingdom.

I am also thankful for the current financial challenges that are facing this ministry. It is through challenges such as this that we are able to witness how God works through each of you to help bring the kingdom alive on this earth. Challenges faced and met are an example of God's grace and love put into practice.

The Mountain T.O.P. family has a history of responding to every need placed before them. We are once again asking you to respond to this need. Everyone that receives this newsletter has been blessed in some way by God's ministry through Mountain T.O.P. You have seen lives transformed, even your own. We need your financial help now more than ever. **Any gift given is a gift God will use to continue the mission of this ministry.** Please consider how you can help.

Finally I am thankful for each of you. The restoration and transformation that takes place through this ministry happens as a result of each of you hearing God's call upon your life. On behalf of all of us who serve this ministry year-round we thank you for all you do and may God bless you and may His grace be with you during this wonderful holiday season.

Ed Simmons

GRATEFUL GIVING

Our 2011 Annual Giving Campaign began in October. We hope that you and your family will prayerfully consider a year end gift to Mountain T.O.P. Don't forget that if you make your gifts by December 31, you will not only receive the satisfaction of supporting this ministry, but you may also realize significant tax savings. If we are blessed enough to have you help us finish the year financially strong, there are several easy ways you can give:

- ***We Love Cash!*** It is the simplest way to give. You can write a check or even charge your gift to a credit card to build up those airline miles. Please contact Kim at 931.692.3999 or **give online!**
- ***Give a Gift of Stock.*** The growth in the stock market has made giving appreciated stock even more attractive. A gift of long-term appreciated stock offers two tax savings: you can avoid capital gains tax on the stock and receive a deduction based on the current market value of the stock versus what you paid for it originally. Please contact Buddy Boyce for assistance at 615.279.9917.
- ***Donate your Car or Truck.*** Vehicles that cannot be used by the ministry can be sold or traded for vehicles that can be used. Ronnie Scissom, our gifted and talented mechanic, can work miracles. Please contact Buddy for assistance.

- **Honor a Friend or Relative.** Give a gift in honor or memory of someone you love. We will recognize these gifts with a note to those you want recognized.
- **Give a Designated Gift to the Mountain TOP Foundation.** Give to one of the three designated permanent endowment funds within the Mountain T.O.P. Foundation. Gifts can be designated to the General Fund, George Bass Brick & Mortar Fund or the Scholarship Fund. Contact the office at 931.692.3999 if you have any questions.
- **Matching Gifts.** Many companies offer matching gift programs that will double, and in some cases triple, the value of their employee's gifts. Some companies will even match gifts and/or volunteer hours made by retirees, spouses and/or children. Please contact your company's human resources department to determine if your company has a matching gift program and whether your gift to Mountain T.O.P. is eligible for a match. Each company has its own guidelines for employees, spouses, retirees, and widows/widowers. Most corporate procedures are simple:
 - Request a Matching Form from your company.
 - Complete and submit the form to Mountain T.O.P. along with your gift.
 - Mountain T.O.P. will verify the completed form and return it to the company.
 - The company issues a matching gift contribution to Mountain T.O.P.
 - Completed forms can be sent with your personal gift to:

Mountain T.O.P.
P.O. Box 128
Altamont, TN 37301

Your financial support is so important to this ministry and enables us to respond to God's call to meet the needs of those within our service area.



AIM FALL WEEKENDS REPORT

This Fall was a huge success! Not just because **221** volunteers from **13** states worked for **12** families and the Grundy County Food Bank resulting in **3,536** volunteer hours and an estimated **\$78,000** of materials, increasing value of the homes by approximately **\$142,000**, but also because we measure success in other ways ... By the privilege we have of worshipping together daily in our camps and weekly within the counties we serve. By the stories of restoration we hear during sharing and around the dinner tables. By realizing that different doesn't mean wrong, but shows the beautiful, all encompassing bounty of God's creation. By the way churches, who have never met, take care of each other in extravagant ways. By the examples of servants who daily struggle through cold weather, conflict, and unsettling circumstances. By dreaming what a "life changing experience" and "it's been a great weekend" can do in the valley below. By our ability to accept feedback gracefully, and do something about it. By offering a space for people to experience God, and then being able to step back and let it happen. By grieving over death and tragedy with the people we serve, and then being able to answer them with hope. By not having to say anything and still knowing we've said a lot by our actions.

LET THE PEOPLE SPEAK

I have been attending MTOP camps, either youth or adult since 1993. Some trips were more memorable than others because of a particular family that I had the privilege of working with or because of the

bonding that occurred with team members or other members of the camp community. However, all of my experiences prior to my last AIM camp involved working in a home. This last trip, my Ministry Production Team was asked to work at the Grundy County Food Bank in Tracy City. As I shared with the entire AIM community that weekend, our service to the Food Bank caused me to realize that we can serve multiple families and still be part of the community experience that is such a vital part of the MTOP experience. The Food Bank director informed us that they serve approximately 200 families each month and expect that number to grow as they improve their facility. I will now be more open to working wherever the Lord leads.

***Curtis Piper, Board Member
Hillcrest UMC - Nashville, TN***



CURTIS (2ND FROM LEFT) AND THE GRUNDY COUNTY FOOD BANK MPT!

This Fall I was fortunate to attend A.I.M. on two separate occasions. I went with my husband and a few members from our church on my first trip. My Mother had expressed interest in joining us, however did not attend the first week. My first visit to MTOP was an amazing experience; however, I couldn't stop thinking about how much my Mom would enjoy this Ministry and how I wish she was here with me. Upon returning home and reflecting on my experience, I decided that I just couldn't wait an entire year to share this opportunity with my Mom. I asked her if I could take her to MTOP for the last week of A.I.M as an early birthday present and she gladly accepted! Although I did not

think it was possible, my second trip to the Mountain was even better than my first!

In my opinion MTOP is everything it aspires to be and more. MTOP strives to “help meet the physical, spiritual, emotional, and social needs” of the families they serve, as well as “actively encourage the Christian growth of the participants who come to MTOP.” They truly put faith into action!



JESSIE ON THE O'BRIEN WORKSITE

I was blessed with the opportunity to work with the O'Brien Family — Carlotta, Stanley, and Jessie. Our MPT was able to meet the family's physical need by enclosing a patio, which created a room for Carlotta's seven-year-old Grandson, Jessie. However, the spiritual, social, and emotional connections that were made between our group members and the family were priceless.

Our week was focused around being salt and light. We were encouraged to “let our light shine before others, that they may see *our* good deeds and glorify *our* Father in heaven” Matthew 5.16. Although I strived to be light and inspire those around me, I found myself blinded by the light illuminating from my new 7-year-old assistant, Jessie.

Despite the difference in our age, Jessie and I shared many things in common. We both love the Lord and baseball/softball! Saturday morning when we arrived at the O'Brien house, Jessie was standing in the driveway in the freezing cold with his bat and ball in hand, just waiting to play! He was so excited that MTOP was at his Grandma's house to “help

him build his room!” MTOP prides itself on being a partnership and Jessie did not take that lightly! Every minute that was not spent playing ball or with his animals, he was motivated to do his part. He either sat at the top of the ladder with Mitten's, his cat, supervising our work, or helped me screw in the drywall. Occasionally he decided to head up a project of his own, like driving nails into the floor boards or attempting to build furniture for his room. He even took it upon himself to make me a cross out of a few scraps of plywood.

Through my experience at MTOP my faith has grown deeper than ever. Jessie has inspired me to let my light shine in hopes of inspiring others. The lyrics from one of the songs that were sung during worship really resonated with me and this is my prayer: *Dear God, Please “Set a fire down in my soul that I can't contain and I can't control. I want more of you, God.”—Amen*

Shannon Steinhilber, Lakeside Fellowship UMC - Sanford, FL



AMY (1ST ON LEFT) AND THE O'BRIEN MPT!

TRULY A MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE

After years of discussion, a group of ten “thirty-somethings” from Jones Chapel United Methodist Church in Danielsville, Georgia finally decided to go see what all of the fuss was about. Jason Braswell, a former Mountain T.O.P. staffer, assured us all that this would be a life-changing experience. He was right.

When we loaded up our tools and old clothes and headed up to Tennessee, we went fully expecting to “be a blessing to others.” Little did we

know that we would be the ones who would be blessed beyond measure. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of us found ourselves way out of our comfort zones. We did not anticipate being separated from our spouses, crawling underneath houses, or balancing on rooftops. We also did not expect to find ourselves embraced and loved by an entire community. We left Georgia expecting to complete some major construction projects. We were so focused on remembering to bring the right tools and making sure that we all had nail aprons and safety goggles, that we almost forgot why we were really called to Mountain T.O.P.

The resounding theme of our weekend was the realization that, “it is not about the material things we accomplish on our trip – what matters the most is that we simply respond to the call to come and serve.”

We were reminded of this all weekend long. We were in awe of the number of older, retired team members who worked by our sides all weekend. We were humbled by the amazing hearts of team members who were there to give so freely of their time and skills. We were deeply touched by the bonds that were formed with the families we worked with all weekend.

It took an arm full of gifts from a six-year old boy for me to realize what it truly means to have a Mountain TOP experience. I may not remember where to place the nails when framing a wall, but I will never forget the little boy who sat on the ground with scrap pieces of wood and made crosses for those of us on the team. I will never forget the joy in those big brown eyes when that sweet little boy saw my Mountain TOP name tag. The “warm fuzzy” he brought me from his own summer camp name tag did much more than decorate my name tag. It warmed my heart.

Amy Hancock, Jones Chapel UMC Danielsville, GA

For 11 years, youth and adults from St. Luke's Presbyterian Church have experienced the work and ministry of Mountain T.O.P. The young people return home every summer with wonderful tales of building things like wheelchair ramps for a homeowner and learning all about that person's life or they would come back infused with amazing energy from working with children at the day camp. There was never a doubt that what was happening on the Mountain T.O.P. was worth shouting about!

Yet, other travelers to Mountain T.O.P. have been very quiet. A few adults would seem to magically gather in the parking lot on a sunny and brisk Thursday in October. Their luggage might include a tool belt or maybe a power tool. They stand in a circle to pray and then climb in their cars and drive away simply to return on Sunday afternoon without much fanfare.

So, when the opportunity came for me to be a part of one of those Mountain T.O.P. adult teams, I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew what to expect from a youth week, but those adults have served so quietly over the years that I didn't know much at all about a Fall AIM weekend. Perhaps it was better that way. For how could I have ever expected the way that the Holy Spirit moved throughout the process of selecting MPTs, or the perfect way to "soar" while singing, or the quiet moment on Friday night when the stars seemed to multiply before our eyes?

And how can one expect the glimpses of grace that we would catch in those moments while insulating pipes under a house, or praying with a homeowner who just received sad news, or when the team finishes the project in spite of the fact that the nails we really needed were already sent back to the warehouse?

I now know what I could have expected by watching those adult groups from St. Luke's each time

they came and went, and what each of us might expect when heading up the mountain - be it spring, summer or fall. And it reminds me of a prayer offered by Father Mychal Judge:

Lord, take me where You want me to go, Let me meet who You want me to meet, Tell me what You want me to say, and then let me get out of Your way.

With profound gratitude to and for all who make Mountain TOP the amazing ministry it is,

***Shannon Dill, Minister
St. Luke's Pres - Dunwoody, GA***



WANT TO SEE MORE OF AIM 2011?

Check out AIM participants photo galleries and videos:

***Reenie Fulton
Morton Memorial UMC
Monteagle, TN***

***Don Carson
Ponte Vedra UMC
Ponte Vedra, FL***

Check out our NEW project gallery to see images from all 5 weekends, your MPT and read what MTOP completed at each site!

Check out the 2011 AIM Fall Weekend Album!

Check out this VIDEO from the families we served this Fall!

Check out the MTOP blog!



WEEKEND 2 KING MPT!



WEEKEND 5 HALL MPT!



WEEKEND 4 WOMACK MPT!



WEEKEND 3 BIVENS MPT!



WEEKEND 3 BAILEY MPT!

FRIENDS WEEKEND 2012

Friends Weekend is a special time on the mountain when we welcome folks to come work on projects in camp. **2012 Friends Weekend will be held February 29th – March 4th at Camp Cumberland Pines.** We have several important projects to help get the camp ready for the new program year. Our first project is to renovate the existing Friends cabin. We will be renovating the women's restroom, installing new wood flooring throughout and beginning the process of updating the bedrooms. Our second project is constructing a roof over the existing worship area that will provide shade and rain protection in the summer. The third project is the renovation of the meeting side of the dining hall which will include removing and sound-proofing the wall between the dining room and meeting room, installing cabinets and a counter for use during AIM weeks, installing a new drop ceiling with enhanced lighting & more ceiling fans and installing new doors. The fourth project is the renovation of two camper cabins in the boys area. We will be adding new siding, doors, windows and improved electrical. The final project is to continue the renovation of the Peabody cabin bedrooms. Friends Weekend is full of hard work and great fellowship, where we suspend normal evening activities and allow for reconnection through a relaxed environment. We look forward to having you be a part of this special weekend. Come for all or part and enjoy helping prepare our facilities for another incredible year of ministry. Applications for this weekend are available on the website or by emailing sam@mountain-top.org.

MARTIN METHODIST CAMP WEEK 2012!

In the fall of 2010, Dr. Ed Trimmer, Director of the Cal Turner Jr. Center for Church Leadership at Martin Methodist, came to Mountain T.O.P. with the idea of hosting a Youth Summer Ministry camp week at the college. After much conversation and prayer, we're ready to make the move into a new service area!

When asked about the program, Dr. Ed Trimmer said, "We at Martin Methodist are very excited about the partnership with Mountain T.O.P., another UM organization seeking to fulfill the gospel commandments. The partnership with Mountain T.O.P. fits into our vision about who we are as a UM academic institution of consequence working to better the lives of people in Central Tennessee. We might also add who better to have on our campus and in our dorms in the summer than young people of Christian Churches (United Methodist in particular) trying to live out their faith, striving to 'be doers of the word, and not merely hearers, who deceive themselves.' (James 1: 22.)"

Campers will stay in the air-conditioned college dorms and eat meals in the college dining hall. Tools and worship space will be provided by Pulaski FUMC!

MTOP NEEDS YOU IN 2012!

Are you looking for a way to serve the people of the Cumberland Mountains? With programs offered year-round, you can find an event compatible with your schedule. (NOTE: YSM = Youth Summer Ministry, AIM = Adults in Ministry & MHR = Major Home Repair):

Spring BreakOut	Feb - May
Friends Weekend	Feb 29 - Mar 4
Family Weekend	April 20 - 22
Baker Work Weekend	May 10 - 13
Fish Camp	June 5 - 9
YSM - Service Project	
Weeks 1-8	June 3 - July 28
YSM - Day Camp	
Week 3	June 17 - 23
Week 5	July 1 - 7
Week 7	July 15 - 21
AIM - MHR & KAL	June 10 - 16
AIM - MHR & SUM+	June 24 - July 30
AIM - MHR & Quest	July 8 - 14
AIM - MHR Weekend	July 19 - 22
AIM Fall Weekend #1	Oct 4 - 7
AIM Fall Weekend #2	Oct 11 - 14
AIM Fall Weekend #3	Oct 18 - 21
AIM Fall Weekend #4	Oct 25 - 28
AIM Fall Weekend #5	Nov 1 - 4

**If you feel the Lord calling you to the mountain, visit our website for applications.*

QUICK UPDATES

Spring Breakout: Feb - May! Approximately 8 groups are beginning the registration process with several others expressing interest.

Family Weekend: April 20 - 22! Try our mission trip for the whole family! You'll spend the weekend serving families in Grundy County with your family! We have group morning devotions, games and a campfire!

Fish Camp: June 5 - 9! With the success of Fish Camp, we are excited for the summer of 2012! This five day mission trip is perfect for introducing JR High Youth to mission work and a place to grow spiritually!

YSM: June - July! We are almost 50% full for YSM 2012! First payments of \$50/camper are due on Dec 5th! Get your spot today! See who's coming: [YSM Updates](#)

Martin Methodist Camp Week: July 15th - 21st! Asbury UMC from Maitland, FL has started the registration at Martin Methodist! Join 30 youth and adults from FL as they break into a new service area and help families in Giles County!

Save the Date!
The Gathering: Jan 7th, 2012!

You're Invited!

At the beginning of every new year, we host an event called The Gathering. At this event, we reflect on the previous year of ministry and look forward to another with expectancy. The evening will begin with dinner at Camp Cumberland Pines at 5:00 pm. Camp will be open and available for those who desire to come early. At 6:30 pm, we will worship, listen to great music and get a sneak peek at the theme for 2012. You don't want to miss the excitement! E-vite to follow!

NEED CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

How about a Mountain T.O.P. hat, water bottle or hooded sweatshirt? **SAVE \$5 on orders of \$50 or \$15 on orders over \$100!** Place an order by December 14th and you'll receive it in time for Christmas.

Giving Mountain T.O.P. merchandise for the holidays is a great way to spread your love of the mountain and it helps Mountain T.O.P. at the end of the year - total win/win!! Visit our [campstore!](#)

MORE ON SHOPPING...

If you visit www.GiftsForMyChurch.com and use our church ID: MTOP, a portion of your purchase goes to Mountain T.O.P.! Featured stores include: Target, Best Buy, Wal-Mart, Sears, Mac and Staples.

You can also go to www.missionfish.org and search for Mountain T.O.P. - this will open our page on Ebay, letting you buy & sell with a portion going to Mountain T.O.P.!

MOUNTAIN T.O.P.
P.O. Box 128
Altamont, TN 37301



*"You are the salt of the earth...
You are the light of the world..."*

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