

February 2011

# MOUNTAIN T.O.P.

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



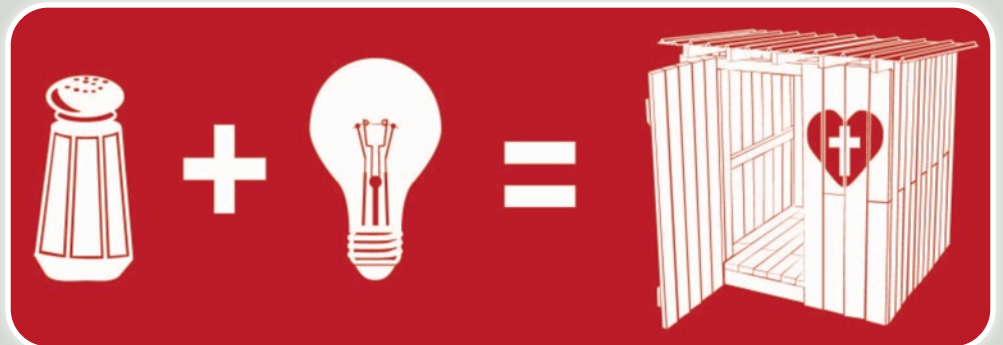
## SET A FIRE: THE GATHERING

60 people came together on the mountain for our annual Gathering event this January. Together, we celebrated 35 years of Christ's ministry. A reflection space filled the dining hall, which included pictures, banners, and memorabilia of years past. Dinner was served fire-side (long stemmed candles adorned the tables) atop beautiful centerpieces created by Mary Margaret Willems. After dinner, worship began with remarks from Mountain T.O.P. founder George Bass. Bringing us all fond memories, he offered insight into how we've remained faithful these 35 years. He said, "We've kept our eye on the ball...We must keep our eye on the ball." In other words, we must keep our eyes on Jesus and His vision for this ministry.

**Other highlights included:** The Triple J Showdown, Jen Whitson, John Robinson and our own Jay Koelbl gracing the musical stage with a guitar, banjo and stand-up bass. A look back at a hope-filled year. An invitation to our new Extending the Partnership focus. A look forward to our 2011 theme. And a prayer for all who joined us in 35 hours for this ministry.

Our prayer for 2011, as the song that filled the room that night goes:

*"Set a fire down in my soul,  
that I can't contain,  
that I can't control,  
I want more of you, God (x2)..."*



## 2011 THEME!

What does it mean?! Allow me to solve the equation: **Salt + Light = Restoration!** Matthew 5:13-16 says, *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

**Our focus for 2011 is to remain true to our spiritual vision to serve the least of these, to fish for people, to love those in need of love while looking through the lens of restoration.** Christ's presence and promise in our lives leads to the restoration of our souls. His light, His love, His faithfulness, reinvigorate, revitalize, revive, and refresh us. Because we know the power of His spirit, we are called to share it with others. To restore others physically, emotionally,

socially and spiritually. To reflect God's heart. To heal with our touch. To function as a body of believers empowering the lives of those we encounter. Join us as we strive to add flavor to the earth and serve as a beacon of light for the lost.

## HIGHLIGHTED GIVER

*A Column dedicated to showing our appreciation of your gifts.*

**Craig Wright**, a member of Evangelical Covenant Church of Hinsdale in Hinsdale, IL, has been coming to Mountain T.O.P. for several years now. He attends Friends Weekend, AIM in the summer and AIM in the fall. He has become a dear friend to all and a huge supporter of this ministry annually. One of Craig's many contributions includes 5 camp mattresses at \$100 each. In his most recent note, he said, "Merry Christmas to all and to all a GOOD NIGHT!" An extremely humble man, he wouldn't want the recognition, but nonetheless we thank you, Craig. For your gifts, your positive attitude and your energy for this ministry. **You are a blessing to all who know you!**

## **EXTENDING THE PARTNERSHIP 2011**

For Mountain T.O.P., ministry is partnership. Living and serving in the same geographic area allows us to be part of the daily fabric of life: serving on boards, attending meetings of civic organizations, and working with other agencies to meet needs. Being a real and timely presence to alleviate these needs within the areas we serve sometimes means that we help in unconventional ways. MTOP is known for building things. But with over 2000 people coming through our gates each year, we are a large force. Large enough to make a significant impact.

**For our Extending the Partnership campaign in 2011 we are collecting supplies for the Grundy County Family Resource Center.** We invite all who are coming to any of our camps and events to bring supplies which are listed below. Anything that the Center cannot use will be distributed among food banks and places where families might receive aid.

- \* Dish soap
- \* Deodorant (men's and women's)
- \* Laundry detergent (powder)
- \* Toothpaste
- \* Shampoo
- \* Conditioner
- \* Bars of soap

**What is the Grundy County Family Resource Center?** The Center is connected with the Grundy County school system. It exists to remove any barrier that a child has to his or her educational successes. For instance, a child is teased for coming to school in dirty clothes. The Center works with the family to provide detergent, money to pay a water bill, or just talking with the parents to help them understand their child's needs. Being successful in school is just one way out of generational poverty.

**Why these supplies?** Just like any local social service agency, the Center works on a small budget. These items are some of the most

needed and requested. Some of these items are not purchasable through governmental assistance. We, as the MTOP family spread out across the nation, can easily collect these supplies through our own resources (churches, schools, communities).

### **How are the supplies distributed?**

Emily Partin, the Center's director, takes referrals of students who might need the Center's help. She then visits with the student and family members to come up with a plan for addressing their needs. If needed she connects the family to other agencies and advocates on their behalf. Ms. Partin is a native of this area, has a masters in counseling, and has a heart for seeing justice done in Grundy County.

**How can I help?** Many churches have used the Extending the Partnership campaign for their group's mission project. For instance, St Luke's Presbyterian Church in Dunwoody, GA, supported the book drive in 2009, and involved their community's school system. Thousands of books were collected this way. Other churches have used the campaign for a Vacation Bible School project. We encourage you to use this campaign to highlight the many ways we can be involved in missions.

You can bring these items to camp when you come for any event in 2011. Or just contact us in the office (931.692.3999 or [julie@mountain-top.org](mailto:julie@mountain-top.org)) for additional help.

For churches attending the Martin Methodist Camp Week, we are partnering with St Andrew's Memorial UMC located in Giles County, TN. They run a "paper pantry" and will distribute any donated items.

*"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Luke 6:38*

### **GEORGE BASS GREETING AMY SMITH**



### **REFLECTION SPACE**



**KATIE PHILLIPS (LEFT) AND MEL BRISON (RIGHT)**



### **STAYING CONNECTED**

Have you heard about the new Mountain T.O.P. **Blog**? Those of us who are here year-round thought it would be fun to keep you informed on what's happening weekly. Posts allow you to read about who's in-camp, what we're working on, and offer a glimpse of mountain life the months out of the year that you can't be here.

Check it out:

**NEW MTOP BLOG**

## **MARTIN METHODIST YSM**

### **CAMP WEEK!**

Two churches have already registered for our ***BRAND NEW*** YSM Camp Week at Martin Methodist College.

Back in the Fall, Dr. Ed Trimmer, Director of the Cal Turner Jr. Center for Church Leadership at Martin Methodist, came to us with the idea of hosting a camp week at the college. Several years back, Ed pioneered a similar program with ***Carolina Cross Connection*** and Pfeiffer University. With multiple summers of success, he was eager to seek out partnership with Mountain T.O.P.

After many conversations, prayer and a visit to Martin Methodist, we are passionate about the expansion of Mountain T.O.P. into a new area. ***Giles County, similar to several counties in our service area, does not have any organization like Mountain T.O.P. working in its communities.*** God has given us the opportunity to help even more people physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. We are excited to answer the call!

#### ***How will this work?***

The YSM model will remain the same... the YRGS, the projects, the daybreaks, the worships...

The camp week will be held ***Week 7, Sunday, July 17th - Saturday, July 23rd.*** Cost is \$375/person. Campers will arrive at 9 am for a day of orientation, moving in and YRG breakdown. Monday - Friday, campers will work on minor home repair projects. Saturday morning, campers will eat breakfast, pack up and head out. Every day will include daybreaks, sharing and worship.

#### ***What will be different?***

• Participants will stay in ***air conditioned*** dorm rooms! The college will provide accommodations in Criswell. Each room will house

two participants. Each floor will have a community bathroom with five showers.

- Participants will eat in the dining hall. Breakfast and dinner will be a buffet. Cooler lunches will be taken to the worksites.
- Participants will only need Van Buckets. We have partnered with Pulaski FUMC and they will be providing the other tools necessary for the work sites! Pulaski FUMC will also provide space for worship and other programming events!

### **DID YOU KNOW?!**

***35% of Grundy County is on SNAP (food stamps) and is eligible for food every other month from the Grundy County Food Bank (GCFB).*** This food bank alone serviced over 450 County families in the last 2 months. GCFB is part of a larger network of churches and non-profit agencies working together to address rural hunger issues in Grundy County.

Though we do not directly address hunger, Mountain T.O.P. takes part in the Federal Nutrition Program. Grundy County children who attend one of our summer day camps are offered a healthy lunch every day they attend. Because of our presence in the county and our relationship with the school system, we know that in some instances this may be a child's best meal of the day.

#### **Looking at Rural Hunger**

In the US, rates of food insecurity, the statistical measurement of hunger or near hunger among rural households, is generally lower than urban households but slightly higher than the national average. The irony is many of these food-insecure households are in the very rural and farm communities whose productivity feeds the world and provides low-cost wholesome food for American consumers.<sup>2</sup>



\*14.2% of rural households are food insecure, an estimated 2.8 million households.

\*Compared to all regions, the South continues to have the highest poverty rate (under 100% of poverty) among people in families with related children under 18 years living outside metro statistical areas (21.1%) and inside metro statistical areas (15.8 %).

Although globally enough food is produced to feed everyone, 840 million people are undernourished, 799 million of them in the developing world. Children and elderly are particularly at risk. Each year, six million children die as a result of hunger. Although hunger is also a problem in cities, seventy-five percent of the world's hungry people live in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***Have you thought lately about hunger issues in your own area?***

We encourage your work in fighting hunger, whether that is locally, nationally, or globally! Make sure you check out your own denominations involvement. Share your bread!

1. This is a new series we are running in this year's newsletters. Let us know what you think!
2. Feeding America. Faces of Poverty. Hunger 101. Rural Hunger. [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org).
3. The United Methodist Church, Justice, and World Hunger, The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church — 2004. Copyright © 2004 by The United Methodist Publishing House.

## **SUSTAINING GIVERS**

One of the ministry's fundraising goals is to grow our financial strength by building a base of Sustaining Givers. Sustaining Givers are those that support the ministry on a monthly basis through bank draft or credit card. We made good progress toward our goal but still have a ways to go.

***This year we would like to add 25 new Sustaining Givers.***

The growth of Sustaining Givers will provide a foundation for going into the summer when our expenses are at the highest level. We continue to have ambitious goals, not only with our programming, but also with our facilities. Those that partner with the ministry financially help us toward attaining those goals. The result is we remain the life-changing place God has called us to be for over 35 years.

If you are interested in becoming a Sustaining Giver through bank draft or credit card, please contact Kim VanGundy at [kim@mountain-top.org](mailto:kim@mountain-top.org)

or call her at 931-692-3999. Sign-up today and help us reach our goal of 25 new givers.

## **SPRING SEASON STATS**

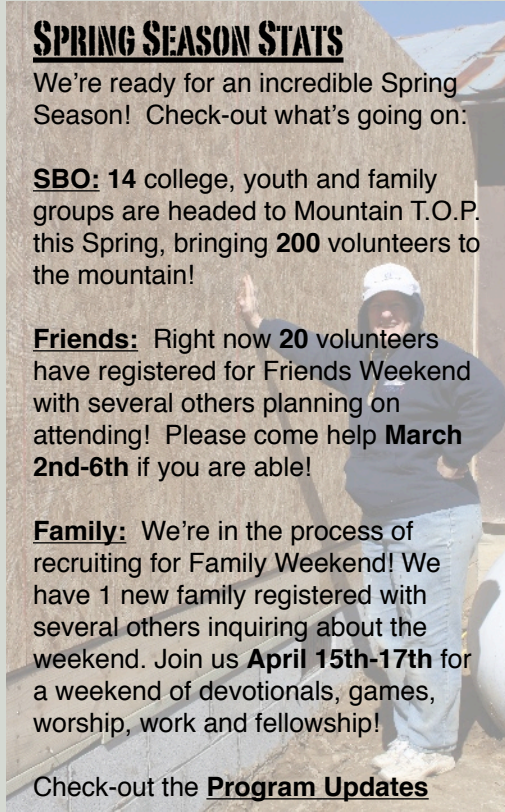
We're ready for an incredible Spring Season! Check-out what's going on:

**SBO:** 14 college, youth and family groups are headed to Mountain T.O.P. this Spring, bringing **200** volunteers to the mountain!

**Friends:** Right now **20** volunteers have registered for Friends Weekend with several others planning on attending! Please come help **March 2nd-6th** if you are able!

**Family:** We're in the process of recruiting for Family Weekend! We have 1 new family registered with several others inquiring about the weekend. Join us **April 15th-17th** for a weekend of devotionals, games, worship, work and fellowship!

Check-out the **Program Updates**



## **\$80,000!**

As you've heard, Mountain T.O.P. received a grant of \$80,000 from the USDA for Major Home Repair materials. We are thankful that this money will be able to help families who are not eligible for other loans. Please help us help others by coming to AIM this summer. The more volunteers we have, the more families we can work with!

\***June 12th - 18th:** KAL/ MHR

\***June 26th - July 2nd:** SUM+/MHR

\***July 10th - 16th:** Quest/MHR

\***July 21st - 24th:** MHR Weekend

## **ANNUAL REPORT CORRECTIONS**

Linda Dorton - \$1-249  
White House UMW - \$1-249  
Slater's Chapel Methodist - \$1-249  
Ray Jones - \$500-999  
Linda Colebank - \$500-999  
Robert Matthews - \$500-999  
Doug & Mary Lamb - \$1500-up  
Craig & Linda Wright - \$1500-up  
Reed & Deeda Bradford - \$1500-up

## **MOUNTAIN T.O.P.**

**P.O. Box 128  
Altamont, TN 37301**



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