

2010 It Worked for Us Award Winners
Oklahoma Conference Board of Laity

ARDMORE DISTRICT

"New Season in Sunday School"

Davis First UMC

Kathy Hellack, 1630 East Main Street, Davis (580-369-0225) khellack@sbcglobal.net

Our Sunday School program was in bad need of improvement. There were only four children in Sunday school classes – that's total! The hallway and most rooms were silent. The total program was running about 25 people. We began to pray.

Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, our pastor, and other interested church people had a meeting in the sanctuary. We discussed what was missing, and in our case, we did not have a class to offer our young families. A young couple who had children of their own stepped up to teach a parenting class. We announced the class at our Vacation Bible School closing program where all the parents of the kids were present to watch their child sing. The name of the class was, "Making your Child Mind without Losing Yours." This drew interest. We asked for new teachers to take on and prepare for the new classes that we hoped to have. They said, "Yes!"

Then we had a Sunday school "Kick Off." We rented a dunk tank and had a homemade ice cream contest. We sent out letters and made phone calls and put articles in the newspaper. The new families could see the classrooms, meet the teachers, and just get to know us at our "Kick Off." Our pastor, from the pulpit, encouraged people to come to Sunday school. We also asked four people to give their testimony of what Sunday school meant to them over the course of a month. Finally, we set the beginning of our "New Season in Sunday School" for August 16, 2009. It was the beginning of public school.

On that day, people kept coming and coming and coming through the doors! What a miracle! We went from about 25 faithful and loved Sunday school attendees to 84! We were totally overwhelmed with JOY! We still are! People of all ages are hearing the precious Word of God. Families have joined the church! We have had 17 new members this year.

As an incentive to get children to come, our pastor volunteered to cut his hair into a **MOHAWK!** Well, he did! We had such a great time celebrating the miracle that God had given to us. Our God is AMAZING!

We would definitely recommend something similar to other churches. In fact, we have held a "Sunday School Huddle" to tell five other churches about what happened. We would love for other churches to experience the thrill and joy of full classrooms on Sunday morning. May God continue to use this as an encouragement to others.

BARTLESVILLE DISTRICT

"Try Church"

Bartlesville First UMC

Tucker Harrison, PO Box 1136, Bartlesville 74005-1136 (918-336-3361) tphjsh@sbcglobal.net

A subcommittee of the Evangelism Council developed a "Try Church" advertising campaign. The subcommittee is led by a lay member and includes both lay members and staff. Scripts for television commercial spots are developed jointly by laity and staff and they work together to edit the spots. Youth, children and adult lay members are recruited to "star" in short television commercials. Children and their friends have been energized by seeing themselves on television. Youth have not only been energized as cast in the commercials, but have gotten involved in suggesting themes for future spots and, like the children, enjoy seeing themselves on television. The spots run on local cable and are targeted for times and channels when families are likely to be watching. Billboard advertising is coordinated with the television spots, have the same subjects and follow the same theme. The theme was developed and implemented in 2009 and continues to be used in 2010. Billboard examples are attached. Television commercials are posted on You Tube under "FUMC Bartlesville."

While the activities featured are Bartlesville FUMC activities, the "Try Church" theme and campaign are really aimed at encouraging un-churched families to find and "try" some church. "Try Church" was copyrighted by Bartlesville First UMC, but can be licensed by other UMCes for use in their communities. "Try Church" should help any Methodist church put the message into their community.

CLINTON DISTRICT

"Feed My Sheep"

Hobart First UMC

Bob Shaw, 305 N. Hitchcock, Hobart 73651 (580-726-2445) shaw2851@sbcglobal.net

Last spring when we discovered we would not be able to be a part of the Regional Food Bank's Summer Feeding Program providing free lunches during the summer to school-age children, we decided to put together our own program.

And it was a great success. A dedicated team of volunteers provided lunches for more than 400 persons in June, July and August. Others responded to the idea and made sure the bills got paid.

We had planned to be part of the Food Bank's program this year, but unfortunately demand was so great that new applications were not accepted. So Hobart First UMC will sponsor its own summer feeding program again this year. We call it "Feed My Sheep" because it is based on Jesus' command to Peter which we read about in John 21:17.

In less than a month, school will be out for the summer. While most of the children are excited about the break, many face increased food insecurity during the summer. Between 70 and 80 per cent of the children in Hobart Elementary School participate in the reduced/free lunch and breakfast program.

Some educators say that Monday mornings at breakfast and Friday afternoons at lunch are the quietest times in the school lunch room. Why? Because these are the first and last meals that some of our children have coming out of and going into the weekends. As school lets out for the summer, these meals go away. We're getting the word out earlier this year so we can reach more kids than we did last year.

On some days none showed up; on others as many as 18 persons were served. In all, 412 meals were served.

Emilie Krieger has agreed to again coordinate the scheduling of volunteers. Misty Reents will return as coordinator of the menu and supplies.

However, volunteers will be needed to spend a couple of hours around lunchtime each day to prepare and serve the lunches. A signup roster will be available soon in the church office.

Many of those who were served by this program last summer said it was a blessing to them because they would probably not have had lunch otherwise.

However, the blessings extended to our church family as well. All who took part reported they got much more out of the experience than they gave.

Proving that you don't have to travel very far to be part of a mission project, our Rotational Sunday School kids took a field trip recently to help sort 21 boxes of canned goods donated to the Hobart Area Ministerial Food Pantry by Quartz Mountain Christian Camp. Taking part were (from the left) Cade Moore, Alesha Ridner, Cole Moore, Nathan Clark, Allie Finch and Christian Davidson.

ENID DISTRICT

"Carmen UMC Food Ministry"

Carmen UMC

John Bizzell, 404 N Grand, Carmen 73128 (580-541-8381) thejbiz@aol.com

In October of 2009, the Carmen UMC Food Ministry was started by Richard McElhatten. The ministry started as a Wednesday morning breakfast with 5 people in attendance the first Wednesday. On February 16th of this year a Tuesday fried chicken dinner was added to the lineup. The primary focus is to provide

meals to homebound, financially hardshipped, etc. The breakfast serves between 15 and 25 meals each week and the Tuesday dinner is serving between 65 to 80 persons each week. Of the 65 to 80 dinners served, 44 are on a weekly basis for delivery in Alfalfa and Woods Counties. 90 year old Nettie Copenhaver came out of retirement to fry the chicken on the first and third Tuesday of each month; fried chicken is served every Tuesday. Marcia and Robert Brown deliver 25 to 30 dinners every week; Nancy Oldham, Lisa Copenhaver, and Debbie Newman assist in deliveries. Lisa Copenhaver provides dessert each week. Our church is reaching out to those in our community through our food ministry. All meals are free of charge. Donations from those dining in make this ministry possible from a financial standpoint. The fellowship among the diners is tremendous and it is evident that it is spreading through the community. This ministry is working for us and it can and will work for you with a few Spirit led people.

LAWTON DISTRICT

"Monday Game Day"

Duncan First UMC

Cheryl Dowell, 2207 W. Spruce Ave., Duncan 73533 (580-252-4322) 2dowells@sbcglobal.net

This ministry started as an opportunity for seniors in our congregation to gather in fellowship, play board games, card games, etc. and share a noon meal once a week. We chose Monday because we were already serving lunch that day to our youth. Turns out that has become a great way for our youth and senior adults to get better acquainted!

Game Day has also grown into a very important outreach and nurture ministry in our community. We average 36-40 adult participants of all ages and from many different churches. In fact, this is so meaningful to those who attend that, even when the church offices are closed on a Monday for a holiday, Game Day must go on!

Game Day has become "Bridge Day" with a beginners' table for those who are rusty or have never played. This table is overseen by a veteran player and the rookies are moved to regular play when they are ready. There are 2 sisters who come each Monday to accompany their father – one of the sisters drives 50 miles roundtrip to participate. They are members of other churches but never miss Game Day!

The participants have initiated a book and puzzle exchange with each other. They also bring homemade cookies and other goodies to share with one another.

Because of the fellowship, camaraderie and sense of belonging provided by this group, 3 of our Game Day participants have become members of our church and 2 more have begun to attend worship regularly. Members of our staff eat lunch with the group. We also extend a personal invitation to this group to all of our special events throughout the year.

This is a great ministry that brings people together for fun and fellowship. The cost is minimal and the rewards are great. We highly recommend this type of ministry to churches of all sizes!

Summary

This ministry started as an opportunity for seniors in our congregation to gather in fellowship, play board games, card games, etc. and share a noon meal once a week. It has become "Bridge Day" with around 40 participants who also exchange books and puzzles with one another and bring cookies and other goodies to share. Because the fellowship and sense of belonging provided by this group 3 of our Game Day participants have become members of our church and 2 more have begun to attend worship regularly. This is a great ministry that brings people together for fun and fellowship. The cost is minimal and the rewards are great!

MCALESTER DISTRICT

Combined Youth Group

Heavener First UMC and Heavener Hispanic UMC

Leslea Abshire, P.O. Box 156, Heavener (918-653-3876) blabshire@cebridge.net

The volunteer youth leaders from Heavener FUMC and Heavener Hispanic UMC decided to combine their youth groups. Previously, each group was meeting separately in their respective churches. Each group had

about 5 youth who consistently attended. As the leaders from both churches began having conversations with each other, they realized that they could do much more if they combined their resources. As a combined group, the youth have participated in Youth Force, Confirmation Camp, OU/OSU Bedlam Campus Ministry events, and St. Yootz Day, in addition to their weekly youth group.

This ministry has had a positive impact on both memberships as they see the unity strengthened between the Hispanic and Anglo youths of our community. And they witness the energy and enthusiasm that can come from joining together. The size of the combined youth group has grown to about 25. The workload for the leaders has also been lightened as they now share their duties among 3 youth leaders. This ministry makes disciples for Christ by allowing our youth to live out the inclusiveness demonstrated in Jesus' teachings.

We definitely recommend this idea to other rural churches that have both an Anglo and Hispanic (or other mission) churches in their community.

Summary

The volunteer youth leaders from Heavener FUMC and Heavener Hispanic UMC decided to combine their youth groups. Since then the group has grown from a total 10 to 25 youths.

MUSKOGEE DISTRICT

"Disciples Under Construction – Muskogee Wesley Children's program"

Muskogee Wesley UMC

Donna Lane or Jeremy Jones, 313 East Peak Blvd., Muskogee 7440

(918-687-1589) marshapurtell@sbcglobal.net

"Ask and It will be Given – God's Abundant Love"

It began with the preparation and the development of our strategic plan. We came to the realization that if we were to be a vital church that we needed children. Prayer began during joys and concerns and by members during the week. We had a couple of children in attendance occasionally. They approached one of our members to be the new teacher. She was pleased and immediately began with the use of One Room Sunday School materials. Then came District Confirmation Camp. Three youth attended. But, in the midst of picking them up, several neighborhood children gathered and asked if they could go. They also asked if they could come to church. The need was visible and the prayers were being answered – (while we were [are] being saved) but there was an obstacle. It was taking four and five trips in the car to transport everyone. We needed a van. To make a long story short we now have thirty children with four bulging Sunday School classes and we are blessed with the children and youth. We are not making two van runs. Praise God! We are blessed with the help of others including but not limited to: many individual gifts, ideas for Super Saturday from the pastor at Choteau, choir robes from Aldersgate, shared materials for bible school from Fort Gibson UMC, materials and support from Faith UMC, mission activity from Cookson, hands on assistance from the District, prayers and help from the Conference. Truly, this ministry was lead by the Holy Spirit and connectional in its formation and development. We continue to pray for guidance – and strength – and more adults who will find blessings with us. Though some of their parents attend only occasionally, weekly we are blessed and inspired with the smiles and energy and discipleship of children. We cannot help but believe there are children in every town who hunger and thirst.

OKLAHOMA CITY NORTH DISTRICT

"Mission Sunday"

Choctaw UMC

Charla Gwartney/Carolyn Garner, 1200 N. Choctaw Road, Choctaw 73020 (405-390-8151)

office@choctawumc.com

In October, Choctaw UMC adopted the motto, "Don't go to church, be the church." Instead of holding Sunday morning Service, we spent the morning serving the community through nine mission projects. Each project had a lay leader who assessed the needs, determined how many volunteers were needed and supervised the work. In addition, another lay leader coordinated all projects in the field during the Sunday morning. Over 150 people served the community on that day! They cleaned up area soccer fields, did repair work on elderly members homes, and made blankets for our local police force to carry in their vehicles – to name a few. It changed how we saw ourselves as a church. We truly understood our role as servants.

OKLAHOMA CITY SOUTH DISTRICT

Mongolia Mission

Korean First UMC

Jason Chang, 225 SW 136th, Oklahoma City (405-703-0503) jasonchangdds@gmail.com

I have had the privilege of participating in the Mongolia Mission for the past 5 out of 6 years. This mission is broken down into sub-missions which include: a medical mission, dental mission, carpentry mission, English mission, music mission, and worship dance mission. The Medical mission consists of diagnosing and dispensing medicines to those who are in need. Several hundred patients are usually seen in a 3-4 day period. The carpentry mission consists of repairing and rebuilding anything that is needed at the church that we are residing. This year it will consist of repairing the church that we are currently building in Mongolia. I, myself, have participated in both of these ministries in my time in Mongolia. However, the ministries I lead are the dental mission, in which I extract severely decayed and infected teeth of those who have absolutely no access to dental care. I also lead the English ministry in which we prepare a two week curriculum on English grammar, composition, and conversation, incorporating Bible messages into the lesson. We also teach instruments such as drums, piano, guitar, and bass to all who want to learn using praise and worship songs. This year we have created a worship dance to a popular praise song. We will teach the dance team in Mongolia so that they can use that as a tool to minister to others in Mongolia including remote regions. At the end of every Mongolia mission, we hold a praise night, in which I am the worship leader. It is a night where Christians in Mongolia gather and we praise the Lord, whether in English, Korean, or Mongolian language. Hearing worship songs sung in three separate languages simultaneously gives me a small glimpse of what I believe heaven is like.

This ministry has significantly impacted my membership. It has allowed me to become more involved due to the importance of this ministry. It has also helped me to influence others and get more of the youth and college students more involved in serving at the church. This is one way in which we fulfill the Great Commission. The first word says to "Go". It involves an action. It means to get involved, to do, to not wait, and to make disciples. I would highly recommend this type of ministry to all churches who have a vision to show God's love to underdeveloped countries.

STILLWATER DISTRICT

"VBS Parent's Night Out"

Mannford First UMC

Cyndy Whiten, 1102 E Forest Drive, Sand Springs 74063 (918-760-3724) cvwhiten@cimtel.net

We used our VBS curriculum on four separate nights during last summer. Four Fridays, each three weeks apart during June, July and August, was an "event" for children, and a 3 hour "breathing spell" for the parents of these children. We called it simply "VBS – Parent's Night Out".

The ages of the children were infants through going into the 5th grade, and the classes were separated by age/grade level. The children were fed supper at 5:30 each evening. Then, after the assembly, each class rotated through the different stations, including crafts, music, story, discovery, and games, and the parents would find the children playing and interacting with each other and church member when they came to pick them up at 8:30.

Over all, we had about 80 children from our small community that we were able to minister to. In the Fall, several started coming to our "Kingdom Kidz" program on Wednesday nights. When polling the parents whose children attended, they had only great comments and were so appreciative of the evening sessions, and that we had actually fed the children supper, enabling them to focus on other things for a few hours. We had plenty of church members who participate, and because they had more than one night (actually, they had three weeks) to recover before the next session, they weren't worn out in body, mind or spirit. Hallelujah!

We've had two families that have started attending here that originally came to the church for the VBS, and we've had more that have visited or that bring their children to Sunday School or Wednesday nights. Praise God!

We plan to this again this summer, starting earlier and hosting it every other Friday evening for five

sessions. We already have parents asking about it! This was just the VBS solution that our church needed. It could work for others, as well.

Short Summary

We used our normally-on-week VBS curriculum spread out over four separated nights to keep kids and their families connected throughout the summer. We fed the children supper, then fed their little souls with scriptures, stories, songs, crafts, science, games and joy! We gave their parents a night off, for which they were more than appreciative – they were thrilled! And we kept our “worker bees” from dreading the exhaustion that normally comes from a solid week of VBS.

TULSA DISTRICT

“Food 4 Kids”

St. Stephen’s UMC, Broken Arrow

Donna Dodson, 400 W. New Orleans St., Broken Arrow, OK 74011 (918-455-4202)

donnadodson@hotmail.com

The St. Stephen’s UMCUMW shared with the Administrative Council in the spring of 2009 to their concern for the hungry children in the Broken Arrow Public School system. Under the leadership of the UMW, the church began to work with the school system and “Broken Arrow Neighbors” (a community organization that offers a variety of services for the needy in Broken Arrow) to define who those children were and how they could be helped.

It was determined that there would be a “Food 4 Kids” program within Broken Arrow and the best way to help the children was through the school system. During the summer of 2009, St. Stephen’s UMW began canvassing the community businesses in order to procure monetary funds and/or food to help in the gathering of the necessary food items. They held fund raisers and wrote grants. Beyond their wildest dreams food, money, and grants began to come in. The Broken Arrow Neighbors offered space in which to store the food and a work area in order to sort and bag items for the children. The Food Bank offered to help provide food items.

When school started in the fall of 2009, the “Food 4 Kids” program was in one elementary school and had four children. By April 2010, the “Food 4 Kids” program was in eight schools with 115 children. One school, who is not part of the eight, has asked if they could participate in the program in the fall of 2010. The answer is a resounding “yes!”

Each child receives enough food for the weekend. Every food item can be opened by a child. Nothing needs to be cooked nor refrigerated. The children receive a bag of food on Friday (or the last day of school for that week) and carry the food home. Every child’s name is kept anonymous. The school is the only one who knows which child is receiving “Food 4 Kids.”

The “Food 4 Kids” program has grown beyond what the St. Stephen’s congregation ever dreamed would be possible. It is exciting to hear the stories of people, business people and citizens in Broken Arrow who have heard of the work of St. Stephen’s feeding of hungry children and have wanted to help...either by contributions or volunteering hours of sorting and packing.

The St. Stephen’s UMW which enabled the church to begin a wonderful ministry is seeking a way to feed children in a summer program. Knowing that god works in us when we are willing to work for God, no telling what wonderful outreach ministry will develop through St. Stephen’s UMC.

Can this ministry be done by other churches in other communities? YES! Just ask the people of St. Stephen’s!

How has this impacted the St. Stephen’s membership? When the program began with four children we never expected it to grow to the extent that it has. We were surprised at the number of people who signed up to help sort and pack food bags. We were shocked at the number of people who were willing to help fund such an endeavor. It has energized us and helped us dream of other ways to reach out to all God’s children. We were reminded of what a good and wonderful God we have, that when we are willing to step

out in faith to do the work to which we are called God gives us the resources and the gifts necessary to do the work of ministry.

WOODWARD DISTRICT

"Tuesday Morning Bible Study"

Woodward First UMC

Marion Hopkins, 2421 Brentford, Woodward 73801 (580-256-3653) hopkins.m@att.net

In 1992 Kris Bell was asked to lead a group of women through the Disciple I Study. As is true of most Bible Studies, especially an in-depth study such as this, a group environment with weekly meetings was recommended. As a result, a Tuesday Bible Study Group was formed from women of various ages and backgrounds. Twenty years later, this group has continued to meet on a weekly basis, studying the remainder of the Disciple Study Series (I, II, III, and IV) as well as studies by Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, Kay Arthur, and others. As these women began to absorb God's word into their hearts, they became seriously dedicated to live the life that Christ intended. Passion to serve others led them to develop a ministry toward helping young women. They became "a Tuesday Lunch Bunch", preparing lunch every Tuesday for some 30 to 50 high school students. The goal was to provide a Christian atmosphere for the girls. Prayer request cards were provided, as well as door prizes and lots of love. By praying together, encouraging them, praising them for their accomplishments, many young girls lives were touched.

During the Christmas holidays, the young women were combined with the senior members of the church and a Christmas luncheon was prepared with turkey, dressing, and all the fixin's. Approximately 100 guests were served. The Tuesday luncheons with the girls ended when the high school campus became a closed campus.

This group of women continues to prepare a wonderful holiday luncheon every year for the senior members of the church (by now, several of the women are in this group). It is difficult to describe how this has positively impacted our church. For these members of our church to be honored by being served and appreciated for all that they have done in the past truly a blessing for them and for the givers. Christmas carols are sung and entertainment is provided, and each guest receives a gift. What a blessing!!

Our college students are not to be forgotten. Twice a year during finals, boxes are filled with goodies and gift certificates for fast food and are mailed to each college student in our church. They love knowing that they are still considered part of our church family.

During the past few years, the women took on additional mission projects as well. The community is blessed with various organizations which help the needy. The domestic Crisis Center is one of this group's designate mission projects outside of the church. This facility provides needed shelter for battered women or men. Any time there is work to be done, the director gives a call and these women answer. This past year, the women removed old wall paper from the new administrative offices at the center in preparation for painting. In the past they have decorated bedrooms and provided needed appliances for the kitchen.

The High Plains Outreach Center (Homeless Shelter) provides another outreach project. Again, when needed, these women are called, and they respond. In March of 2010, dozens of boxes and bags were unloaded, organized, and placed in a new clothing storage building for the homeless. This group has spent endless hours sorting, cleaning, building shelves, and doing other various jobs at the shelter. After cleaning out the shelter, a huge sale was organized and run by these women. \$1500.00 was raised to help with God's work at the shelter.

Through the study of scripture, God has truly changed hearts and lives!

I am privileged to submit the Tuesday Bible Study Group for the Laity Award.