What a summer it has been! We were excited and a little nervous at the start. It was our first SWAP season, and we had two summer staff instead of the six we had hoped for. It was a summer of God’s faithfulness and provision. God provided skilled volunteers and part time staff at the right times so that needs were met all around. God provided inspiration from both homeowners and volunteers, and our lives have been enriched by relationships that were built.

In SWAP we emphasize that our task is more than repairing homes. The first word in our name is SHARING and it was carefully chosen, implying a two-way exchange. Sharing equalizes a relationship since each person experiences the pleasure of giving. Sharing might be as simple as exchanging life stories. What could be more valuable?

Following is a collection of responses from summer volunteers, some of which show that sharing indeed occurred. They are quotes from the evaluations that each participant completed at the end of their week.

“It will help me to examine people more closely according to their backstory and not just how things appear on the outside.” - Marlin Miller, Anchor of Hope

“… that the relationships created are the most important and the most lasting.” - Ethan Lewis, Blooming Glen Youth

“I loved connecting with my homeowner, and I love that SWAP emphasizes that we make those connections.” - Madalyn Bergen, Blooming Glen Youth

“I realized how easy it is to have faith when I have everything that I need. I really saw what real faith is in a different way.” - Kenny Stutzman, Anchor of Hope

“The thing most impressed on me this week has been the sturdy willingness and/or ability to do without, and yet practice joy.” - Harrison Horst, Landisville Mennonite.

“… how much more important it is to be a friend to people instead of trying to get your...
We were off to Appalachia the moment the bell rang to let out school for the summer. Kevin and I and our three children piled into the van. Good-bye expansive prairie skies and the flat patch-work of fields; hello lush green mountains and winding switchbacks.

Did I mention my husband is a high school teacher here in Manitoba? This was our second summer at SWAP so we knew good friends were waiting for us down Little Shepherd Trail and we were eager to rejoin the work that God was and is doing in Harlan County.

We got shorted. We had prepared for nine weeks of service – July and August – but were needed for only five. Our short-term service opportunity was cut short due to a shortage of volunteers. We were surprised. Our children were disappointed. Time was short. We checked our expectations.

Summer is over, the scheduled groups have returned home, but the effect that the homeowners and volunteers had on each other’s lives will last forever. Friendships were formed, new insights were gained, and deeper faith journeys were taken.

We had a total of 48 groups representing eight denominations from the following eleven states: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Virginia, Indiana, New York, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Minnesota, Kentucky and Iowa. We had university, high school, church, family, youth and community groups with a total of 677 volunteers so far this year.

We are now hosting our fall groups. At present we have five fall groups with a total of 52 volunteers. And currently, we have two groups bringing 55 volunteer workers, who have signed up for the spring of 2019. This means that there is plenty of room for more groups with more volunteers who will have the opportunity to experience mutually transformative relationships and deeper faith journeys, not to mention the home improvements.

Please consider bringing a group to one of our three locations and expect life changing experiences. It’s easy to register, just go to swap.mcc.org and fill in the application. Hope to see you here!
Welcome Anton

by Anton Shilov, MCC IVEPer
working with SWAP

My name is Anton Shilov; I am from Zaporozhye, Ukraine. I’m thirty years old and for the past fifteen years I was engaged in repairing apartments and houses. I love music, sports, traveling, making new friends, the English language, church, the Gospel—in general there are many things, I like about life!

I learned about the MCC-IVEP (International Volunteer Exchange Program) ten years ago when I repented and came back to church. My friends worked for MCC at the time and they really wanted me to be a part of this program, but at the time I did not speak English very well.

Everything has its time as the Lord said and here I am. I wanted to be a part of this program because I think it’s amazing when you can serve people by doing helpful things and expanding your world and horizons by making new friends and getting to know the body of Christ around the world.

My expectations from this program if in short - I believe that it will change my whole life, and this is a completely new stage for me. As Jesus entered his life changing ministry at thirty years of age, so I believe this experience will completely change my life.

God Shows Up in Unexpected Places

by Louisa Pirozzi-Erb, SWAP Hindman Location Co-coordinator

God sent these people to us right in this spot, in this holler. May Taylor said these words as she was describing her three-year experience with SWAP. In 2016 May had been a widow for a little less than a year and was living in a home that was ready to fall down. The family had to hang blankets against the walls to keep warm and put “cookers” (pots) on the floor every time it rained to catch the water leaking from the roof.

May has had a lifetime of challenging experiences and continues to persevere. She was healed from cancer twice. Two of her six children passed away leaving her to raise three grandchildren. She took care of her husband who had black lung disease and died as a result. May worked as a waitress at two local restaurants for twenty-five years until she became sick herself.

She was told about SWAP from a family member. When Pete and Lou Erb made a home visit, May didn’t think they’d be back for a year...too many applications in front of her. She felt her house was in such bad shape for anyone to want to touch it. When the first of what would be eleven groups came to work she was tickled to death. She felt sorry for the youth squatting in the mud digging a trench because she felt they worked so hard. She thought they must love what they do and couldn’t believe they were doing something for her.

Every group has spent time on May’s porch taking advantage of the shade and conversation. She shared with each volunteer parts of her story. Sometimes it was difficult. Through her conversations with volunteers she was able to tell her story again and again and didn’t feel the burden of grief as much.

May believes that God sent the volunteers not to just work on her house but to help her work through her grief. She said she bonded with each volunteer. Everyone listened, some gave her advice to take things day by day. She was amazed that even the young people would listen to her.

Volunteer Sharon Kuczirka

“Unexpected Places” continued on page 4

By the numbers:

2018 SWAP season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>number of summer staff</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of groups that came to SWAP</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of households served through SWAP</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of volunteers</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2018 SWAP summer staff

Elkhorn, West Virginia

Lydia Musselman
Matthew Kobie
Mark Milburn **
Sara and Troy Fisher **
Jonah Stevens **
Martha, Wilda, and Naomi Beery **

Harlan, Kentucky

Stephen Jones
Ethan Morton
Barry Bishop *
Nancy Vink **
Jessica Broersma **
Anita Helder **
Emma Stutzman *
Sam and Barb Yoder **
Elizabeth Kimmel **
Kevin and Rosella Jane
Gerry and Henny Broersma **
Nick and Michelle Haveman **
Caleb Broersma **
Ray Roland **
Henrietta Feenstra **

Hindman, Kentucky

Aaron Thomas
Amber Combs-Smith
Travis Smith
Steven Dangle **
Tim Siegenthaler **
David Vogtlin **
Adam Auspurger **
Connie Brenner **
Miriam Miller **
Marty Roth **
Selina Roth **
Stan and Marylin Kamp **
John Karl **

*denotes SOOP volunteers
**denotes short term volunteer staff

Every group has spent time on May’s porch taking advantage of the shade and conversation. She shared with each volunteer parts of her story. Sometimes it was difficult. Through her conversations with volunteers she was able to tell her story again and again and didn’t feel the burden of grief as much.

May believes that God sent the volunteers not to just work on her house but to help her work through her grief. She said she bonded with each volunteer. Everyone listened, some gave her advice to take things day by day. She was amazed that even the young people would listen to her.

Volunteer Sharon Kuczirka
work done! Being a Mary instead of a Martha.” - Sue Stutzman, Anchor of Hope

“I was on the roof and sometimes the work was very intimidating, but my team (and site leader Mark) encouraged me to persevere. This job created an environment that allowed me to build up the courage to initiate a relationship with my homeowner.” - Emma Burkhart, Landisville Mennonite

“Many times, stereotypes get in the way of building relationships and understanding, but once you get rid of those, as well as judgement, much can happen.” - Hannah Mast, Park View Mennonite

“I think this week will help me recognize more relationship-building opportunities.” - Grey Fertich, Landisville Mennonite

“People all over the country just want to be accepted and loved.” - Richard Martin, Landisville Mennonite

“This week will help me to remember to never judge someone for a circumstance they might be in.” - Samantha Swartzentruber, Anchor of Hope

“I had stuff to do, and I made the homeowner smile.” - Levi Early, age 10, Weavers Mennonite

“Not everything you hear or see about a culture is true. Sometimes you have to experience and listen to people’s stories to truly appreciate a culture/lifestyle.” - Name withheld by request

“I feel that I was able to contribute to the work being done at our job site and I am thankful that I was able to learn new skills.” - Lori Farrell, West Swamp Mennonite

Join us in giving thanks that Sharing With Appalachian People happened this summer in McDowell County, WV.

met May during her SWAP week in June 2016 and called it a spiritual awakening for her. May invited the group to eat their lunch on the porch and hear her story. After lunch Sharon continued to sit on the porch swing with May and listen. Ten years earlier during a prayer service Sharon was told by a church member that a porch swing somehow was going to be important. Sitting on May’s porch swing Sharon felt a closeness to May and a connection based on similar life experiences. “It felt like it was divine intervention that brought us together…joined on that porch swing in Hindman, KY,” she reflected. They continue to share each other’s stories by exchanging letters to this day.

Work completed on May’s home, through the generosity of volunteers, consisted of putting in a French drain to divert water coming off hill, replacing sheeting and windows, applying vinyl siding, underpinning around bottom, a new roof, and a back entry stoop. May and her son Josh would often be outside working side by side with the volunteers.

“Everyone is a God sent group of people,” said May. “I can’t put into words my appreciation to SWAP.”

and jumped in.

Earlier, God had laid on our hearts that building relationships would be important this summer. Without a moment to lose, we set out to get to know the volunteers who arrived weekly. Without a doubt, this is one of the most interesting and rewarding parts of serving with SWAP. Without exception, the people whose names filled the jobsite board each week had a unique background and calling: teen market gardeners who had figured out how to get a tan while making money; a marine candidate; an inspector of Army Reserve flight simulators; a retired concert pianist who was working on his sense of humor; a couple who left the world of marketing to own and manage an auction business; a cello-playing construction contractor; not to mention pastors, farmers, and DIYers. Each time I was reminded of the boy in John 6; he gave up what little he had and found himself in the midst of one of Jesus’ greatest miracles. That is what I saw at SWAP this summer: people who were excited to watch God transform their meagre gift into a miracle of encouragement and love.

Getting to know the residents of Harlan County was equally noteworthy and worthwhile. Each week Kevin met a new homeowner. He heard stories of feeling overwhelmed and jaded, hopeful but strained. We worked, encouraged, and prayed. One heart-breaking request came from a woman who was caring for her young grandchildren: would Kevin take them home with him so they could be raised well and have good opportunities? We prayed harder. We know God has a plan for Harlan. We saw it in the Toll family at Christ’s Hands and the friendly staff at the Harlan Library. The soulful music of the Causey-Hoskins family at the Church of God and the choirs of the Presbyterians and Methodists filled the mountains with God’s splendor. Pastor Josh at Harlan Baptist boomed: It’s not about getting people into the church doors; it’s about getting the Word into the community.

And then our term was over. The applications for assistance from SWAP were still piling up but the volunteer lists ran dry. We had hoped to give more. We are telling our friends that “…the workers are few” (Luke 10:2). We are praying as God keeps working in Appalachia. Class is back in session but we will see you again when the bell rings.