COVID-19 created many challenges for MCC Appalachia SWAP. But the good news is, we did not give up! In early March 2020, we celebrated meeting a goal of 700 volunteers to only drop to zero in the days that followed. We then realized that the ramifications were worse than just losing volunteers, but rather had huge financial impacts on our program.

As a new program coordinator, I spent days thinking and praying, praying and thinking. How can we make this work? How can we take zero volunteers and limited resources and still make a difference in our communities?

But then God directed me to Judges chapters 6 and 7, the story of Gideon. Gideon learned to trust God step by step, and I had to do the same. I also had to believe that God could still take small numbers and small resources to achieve His purpose.

In the days and months that followed, SWAP began to refocus, reshape and redevelop new program goals under the restrictions of COVID-19. Although there would not be volunteer groups, there would still be location coordinators and summer staff - a small group of less than 10 people.

This very small group of people became the force of hope for the 2020 SWAP summer season going on to help 25 homeowners. In addition to this, we also received some unexpected financial blessings including grants from the Carol M. Peterson Housing Fund and James Graham Brown Foundation along with an outpouring of generous donations from SWAP volunteers and supporters.

But that is not all! In addition to carrying on the mission of SWAP, we were also able to provide assistance to food banks and much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE) to our communities in Appalachia and beyond. In total, we received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) over 400,000 face coverings, 32,000 1-liter bottles of hand sanitizer and 44 drums with 55 gallons each of hand sanitizer.

These much-needed items were delivered and...
SWAP staff, volunteers and homeowners
Please pray for the health and safety of SWAP staff and volunteers as they work in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pray also for the homeowners and the relationships that continue to be built.

MCC’s work around the world
SWAP is a program of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. Pray for MCC’s relief, development and peace work in the name of Christ. To learn more about MCC’s work, both domestically and internationally, visit mcc.org.

Bruderhof volunteers in Harlan

For five weeks in the fall of 2020, SWAP Harlan hosted four young adults volunteering from four different Bruderhof communities.

At the beginning of September, we met via Zoom with Johann Huleatt, outreach director of the Bruderhof, to discuss placing young adult volunteers with MCC SWAP for the fall. Due to the fact that the Bruderhof communities were Covid-free, SWAP felt good about hosting their young people. In 2018, Harlan had hosted a youth group from Bellvale Bruderhof, so we were familiar with the strong work ethic and hands-on skills that are associated with members of the Bruderhof communities.

While in Harlan, Francine Wareham, Janelle Dunn, Kobi Mercer and Matthias Groothoff, all nineteen years old, were able to use skills they brought with them such as welding and electrical. But they also gained experience in some new areas.

Most of the work they did was on MCC SWAP facilities and with our local partner, Christ’s Hands, which provides a food pantry, soup kitchen and other resources to the community. Some of the tasks included concrete and block work, welding, electrical, renovating, roofing, yard work, sorting and organizing clothing donations and distributing food through the food pantry.

Their hard work and energetic service were valuable to the community and to SWAP. Christ’s Hands operates almost entirely by volunteer labor and private donations and serves many people who are in need of food, clothing and other support and resources. Having new, young volunteers was a boost to those who serve faithfully year-round.

MCC SWAP serves low-income families with their home repair needs and provides service and learning opportunities for youth and adults. We value both short and longer term volunteers who help us maintain our facilities and serve our community.

MCC Photo/Pete Broersma

Matthias Groothoff completed a welding project at the SWAP camp in Harlan.

Swamp Reflections

by Lee Martin, SWAP Kimball Location Coordinator

As a young adult I was privileged to serve for three years in a Voluntary Service program under Mennonite Board of Missions (now Mennonite Mission Network) in Mashulaville, Mississippi. It was a profoundly life-changing experience.

One lesson among many came from the “signing wall” in the large old house where we lived. Volunteers who stayed there, whether for three days or three years, were invited to sign the wall in the large upstairs hall. It was interesting to observe that often, the longer a person stayed there, the smaller their signature and associated comments were.

For me, that was due to the transforming impact of living in that community which, over time, percolated through my heart and mind, diminishing my very small part in a much larger story that was being written. It had to do with a growing awareness of what Jesus called “the kingdom of God.” There is a larger purpose, a “God-purpose,” to life, which I am called to join with my all, but which is not all about me.

“Reflections” continued on page 4

Learn more about SWAP
swap.mcc.org
facebook.com/MCCAppalachiaSWAP

(left to right) Matthias Groothoff, Kobi Mercer, Janelle Dunn and Francine Wareham volunteered last fall for five weeks at the SWAP site in Harlan, KY.
Many thanks go out to our volunteers who help with facility improvements at SWAP.

In Kimball, WV, SWAP recently constructed a much-needed utility/pole building that will allow us to park loaded trucks in a location that is secure and protected from the weather without unloading and reloading every evening and morning.

Three sets of volunteers helped with this project.

An ongoing project has been the renovation of the “Turner House” that will be used for SWAP volunteers or staff in the future.

We are grateful for these friends of SWAP who offer their skills. Many of them have volunteered multiple times. We would be unable to make necessary improvements without their time and effort.

Volunteers make a world of difference

by Peg Martin, SWAP Kimball Location Coordinator

2020 Harlan Ministry Needs

• Gift cards for Lowe's, Do It Center, Home Depot or Walmart
• 5x10 enclosed trailer- new or used
• Flex Dewalt tools
• Heat pump for Gate House
• Grease trap for kitchen
• Fifth wheel attachment for pick-up truck
• Individuals to volunteer for a month at a time in the spring or fall

2021 Harlan Ministry Needs

• Gift cards for Lowes or Walmart
• Oscillating saw and blades
• Power miter saw (10" or 12"), with stand, if available
• Reciprocating saw blades
• Deck screws (2 ½" and 3" torx head)
• Kilz primer
• Good quality paint brushes (1 ½" and 2")
• New kitchen, lavatory and tub/shower faucets
• Smoke detectors, CO2 detectors (new, with batteries)
• House wrap, ice guard, synthetic roofing membrane
• 20 volt cordless tools (we have mostly Porter Cable, but would like to move toward Dewalt)
• Belt sander
• Heavy duty pruner
• Pop up canopies
• Roof ridge ladder hook

By the numbers: 2020 SWAP season

25 number of households served through SWAP
7 number of summer staff (including short term volunteer staff)
7 number of special volunteer groups

2021 Kimball Ministry Needs

• Gift cards for Lowes or Walmart
• Oscillating saw and blades
• Power miter saw (10" or 12"), with stand, if available
• Reciprocating saw blades
• Deck screws (2 ½" and 3" torx head)
• Kilz primer
• Good quality paint brushes (1 ½" and 2")
• New kitchen, lavatory and tub/shower faucets
• Smoke detectors, CO2 detectors (new, with batteries)
• House wrap, ice guard, synthetic roofing membrane
• 20 volt cordless tools (we have mostly Porter Cable, but would like to move toward Dewalt)
• Belt sander
• Heavy duty pruner
• Pop up canopies
• Roof ridge ladder hook

From Dover, Ohio, John Chaney, John Karl, Dave Weber, Greg Kimball and John Fondriest installed the garage doors and added electrical service to the pole building. In addition, they stabilized the walls and roof system of another SWAP building.

An ongoing project has been the renovation of the “Turner House” that will be used for SWAP volunteers or staff in the future.

We are grateful for these friends of SWAP who offer their skills. Many of them have volunteered multiple times. We would be unable to make necessary improvements without their time and effort.

This group from Pennsylvania constructed the pole building in less than a week, working after darkness fell to stay ahead of a rainstorm. They are Patrick Stauffer, John Kruis, Tim Miller, Ben Stauffer, Sam Beiler, and Chad Stauffer.

Lori and Joe Friesen of Design Concrete Builders in Harrisonburg, Virginia, came with their two children, Ruth and Ezra, to help pour and finish the concrete floor in the new building.

Juan Adorno, David Lehman, Chris Baker and Dan Smoker of Williamsburg Mennonite Church, Williamsburg, Virginia, worked at the Turner House. They repaired the back porch and stairway, rebuilt and enclosed a space under the porch, installed vinyl flooring, finished sheetrock, patched plaster and painted.

From Greenmonte Fellowship in Stuarts Draft, Virginia, did demolition, constructed new ceilings, and hung and finished drywall. Pictured are Scott Hashagen, Greg Wood, Rob Langellotti, Cory Sandridge, Cliff Burkholder and Lee Martin, SWAP Kimball Location Coordinator.
distributed to schools, shelters, churches, small businesses, non-profits and community members in Appalachia. Due to the abundance of supplies we were also able to spread these to our partners in Goshen, IN; Kidron, OH; and Akron, PA. We also mailed a case of face coverings to a reservation in Montana.

I really don’t know how many people we have helped through the PPE distribution, but every time I see a “white FEMA mask” I am reminded of lives we possibly saved—and to me that matters most!

I have always been told that challenges are blessings. They test our strength, our persistence and our abilities to make decisions under stress. I am confident that all these things were tested in me this year, as a new program coordinator. But through it all I saw God working - step by step, person by person. And with small numbers and small resources we were able to achieve big things through Christ.

Celebrating the dedicated service of SWAP staff

by Kristin Overstreet, MCC Appalachia Program Coordinator

Stephanie Broersma Celebrating 10+ Years of Service

Stephanie has served with SWAP for over 10 years. She first came to SWAP as a cook in 1997 after graduating from college. Later, she and her husband, Pete, became the location coordinators in Eolia, KY (2007-2012) and then in Harlan, KY (2016 to present).

Her background includes a BS in Music Education from Messiah College. She also has a long history of working and serving in Appalachia including teaching music and art at Holy Trinity Catholic School, working at Eolia Christian Community Outreach, faith-based missionary with Meridzo Center, Inc. and volunteering at Christ’s Hands.

Some of her favorite things about working with SWAP include mentoring young adult staff, learning new kitchen skills from each person in the SWAP kitchen, planning menus for SWAP volunteers, hearing volunteers reflect on how they’ve seen God at work in their time with us, doing initial homeowner visits and working alongside her children in groundskeeping.

Stephanie, Pete and their four children currently reside in Harlan, KY. In her spare time, she enjoys making music, reading, gardening, preserving food, baking, organizing, noticing beauty in nature, deep conversations, studying history, experiencing new-to-her cultures and occasionally writing about any of those.

We are so thankful to have Stephanie’s wealth of knowledge and experience on our SWAP team. Thank you, Stephanie, for your many years of service in Appalachia!

Angela Maggard Celebrating 5 Years of Service

Angela has been the Administrative Assistant with MCC Appalachia SWAP for five years.

Her background includes a B.A. degree in Child & Family Studies with an emphasis in Nutrition & Dietetics from Berea College, and an Early Childhood education certification from Hazard Community and Technical College.

Her previous work experience includes a teacher for over 10 years, case manager for children/adults with development delays and 4-H county extension agent.

Angela currently resides in Whitesburg, KY, with her husband, Royce Maggard, and daughters Vatasha, Taliah and Nakeshia.

We are so blessed to have Angela as a part of our team. Thank you, Angela, for the work you do. We couldn’t make it without you!

Those with less materially may teach us much about what is really important in life and what trust in God means to them. When both homeowners and volunteers are able to give and receive in mutually beneficial ways, I believe God smiles.

SWAP is just one very small expression of God’s worldwide kingdom – just one small signature on the wall – but for those involved, I have seen and experienced the life-changing potential. Thanks be to God!