Open Arms Hispanic Ministries

Newsletter | July 2022

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."

Summer Kids' Camp for Hispanic Children | Cheryl Weiss, Board Member

Each Wednesday in June and July, Open Arms runs a summer "Kids' Camp" at Orrville Mennonite Church for the students tutored during the school year plus other children (relatives, friends, and some children of volunteers) who attend, also. There are 28 children in the camp this year: 18 school-aged and 10 pre-school children. The Camp organizer, Kathy Troyer, through many hours of careful organizing and through an attitude of "anything worthwhile is possible with God's help," has made this camp a very special experience for all. The camp will culminate with a pool party at Camp Luz in August.



"Kids' Camp" has 22 volunteers; all dedicated, caring, creative and hard working. Each volunteer makes the children feel respected, safe, and comfortable as they learn and socialize together. Volunteers serve in various capacities: in class, during recreation time, as kitchen support and as drivers. "Kids' Camp" is a rewarding, fun experience for volunteers and children alike.

For preschoolers, a typical camp day might include playing cooperatively through games, puzzles, toy vehicles and play kitchens. They sing songs, do crafts, enjoy books, learn basic shapes, colors and numbers, play outdoors and enjoy lunch. The focus for the preschoolers is to encourage learning and speaking more English and to socialize cooperatively in and out of a class setting.



The school-aged children (4th through 6th grades) have a focus of cooperative learning, improving English reading and writing skills, learning about American culture, being encouraged to ask questions, playing games, making friends and building relationships. On a typical day, they may have a morning lesson related to geography, maps, and seasons, with many opportunities to learn and share through group activities. There is a Bible lesson for all kids together (preschool and school-aged), then outdoor recreation and lunch time. In the afternoon there is individual reading time followed by reading/writing activities around some aspect of American culture and a closing guided quiet time.

At the end of a full day from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., happy campers go home and look forward to the next week of camp. Thank you to the guidance of Open Arms' Executive Director, Haroldo Nunes and to camp organizer Kathy Troyer, for making this memorable experience possible.

Vanita Tadeo: A Lifetime of Service | Denver Steiner, Board Member



We were saddened to hear of the passing of Vanita Tadeo on Sunday, June 26, 2022 after a period of declining health. We celebrate her life and her service to others, particularly those in the Hispanic community. Summarizing such a lifetime of service in a newsletter is a difficult task, other than to say we are confident she was welcomed home with these words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

A lifetime of service is no exaggeration. Raul and Vanita met while in Volunteer Service in Texas. Vanita would continue to use her nursing background as they returned as a married couple to serve in Texas and later in Harrisonburg, VA, and Goshen, IN. In 1968, Raul and Vanita moved to Mexico, where they would serve for 23 years. On returning to Dalton, Ohio, Vanita worked at the Birthing Center in Mt. Eaton. In 2001, Raul was instrumental in starting Open Arms. Behind the scenes, Vanita put her medical background and Spanish to work, helping set up and translate medical appointments for Hispanics in the area even until last year, when she was too weak to physically go to appointments. Yet, she was still on the phone helping set up these appointments! Open Arms would not be known today for supporting Hispanics with medical and dental needs without the work of Vanita.

I would often visit the Tadeos to help Raul with various computer problems he encountered. I never left their house empty- handed. Vanita would always have cookies or a Bundt cake to send home (much to the delight of my children). So ingrained was this embodiment of servanthood that one of her caretakers said that in her last few months when her mind would sometimes slip, Vanita would wake from dreams saying she needed to prepare food for some family or another that she had known in the past.

Up to the very end Vanita served and even dreamed of serving others often quietly behind the scenes. She embodied humble servanthood on a level Mother Teresa would have attested to. In our community, "Mother Vanita" was a saint and will be missed by many.

Strategic Planning Update | Nate Scott, Board Member

For decades, Open Arms has been a community of God's fellow workers. We have tried to honor our partnership by seeking his will for our little corner of the world and joining him in what he is doing. As we continue in this relationship with him, I believe that we are in an exciting moment in the life of Open Arms. We are growing; we are well-resourced; we have broader influence than ever before. With all of this favor from the Lord, we are asking, "How is he asking us to partner with him for the next 3-5 years?"

In an effort to answer this question, our board is pursuing a strategic planning process led by Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi of Design Group International. This process was birthed during our annual board retreat in December and confirmed through subsequent discussions in the first quarter of this year. I have the privilege of serving on the Strategic Planning subcommittee as we meet monthly with Jeanne to clarify our mission, organizational model and areas of service.

Our goal is to have our plan finalized in September and we have much work to do between now and then. Please pray for us this summer, specifically that God would lead us into deeper partnership with him and greater fruitfulness in his work through Open Arms.

STAFF: Haroldo Nunes, *Executive Director;* **Kelsey Hilty Troyer,** *Administrative Assistant*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Cheryl Weiss, Dan King, Denver Steiner, Doug Zehr, Gloria Miller, Nate Scott, Kathy Troyer, Kelly Lawlis, Ken Neuenschwander

A Historic Meeting—Hispanic Focus Group | Dan King, Board Chairperson

On Saturday afternoon, June 18, three board members (Denver Steiner, Gloria Miller, Dan King) served as facilitators of a discussion with five Hispanics who have experienced Open Arm's ministries. It was the first time in Open Arm's twenty-year history for a gathering such as this. The purpose: to receive input from Hispanics who have been impacted by Open Arms in order to discover ways that the organization might improve its services in the future. This meeting is part of a larger Strategic Plan that Open Arms initiated this past February, using the expertise of Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi as our consultant. (see adjoining article)

Sitting together in a circle at the back of Orrville Mennonite Church's sanctuary, the group was a bit shy at first. After introductions were given, participants began to share more freely about their connections with Open Arms. Most of the five participants have settled in the Wayne County area because of family members who had come to the area previously. Two stated that as they have related to Harold and Mimi over the years, the Nunes family has become more of "family" to them than their own relatives. In discussing challenges they have experienced, two major struggles surfaced repeatedly: discrimination (schools, workplace, neighborhood), and not knowing English. Participants listed many ways that Open Arms has been of great assistance to them – summer camp, transportation and translation services, helping to find jobs, registering children for school, and improving relations with local police, to name a few. All spoke highly of the compassionate and patient work of our Executive Director. It was noted that he has too much on his plate and that consideration should be given to increased staffing. Other "dreams" that were expressed for the future were English classes for adults and more legal support for youth who are experiencing dead-ends in pursuit of further education or suitable employment.

As Open Arms seeks to find God's leading for its future, it is likely that more of these Hispanic Focus Group meetings will occur.

Celebration of 17th OH Hispanic Encounters | Haroldo Nunes, Executive Director

The 17th year of Hispanic Family Encounters took place at Camp Luz, Kidron, Ohio, the weekend of June 10th to 12th, 2022. After two years of absence due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this year we celebrated 17 years of gathering. Hispanics from two Ohio Mennonite churches came together for this annual reunion. The topic for the weekend was: **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalms 46:1).**

The main speaker invited for the weekend was Pastor Byron Pellecer from Harrisonburg, Virginia, but due to his catching Covid-19, he could not come to the retreat. Therefore, Pastors Rene Mejia and Haroldo Nunes were in charge of sharing God's Word. One highlight of the event was a good presence of families that had not given their lives to Christ, yet. They participated in the Saturday morning session, sharing their testimonies and how Jesus is working in their lives. God was honored during the entire weekend! Praise the Lord!

Hispanic Mennonites often give testimony of honesty, and the hard work they do. They have a strong sense of community. They desire to be a part of this great nation, the United States. Unfortunately, the Hispanic community is suffering from the lack of immigration laws and an outdated immigration system in place for almost 40 years. Entire families are still being separated due to the lack of fair and humanitarian immigration reform. They are feeling the loss of their unity, their peace, and they feel fear in the streets and at their work places. Our Hispanic Mennonite churches along with Open Arms Hispanic Ministries are working to support and give hope to these families through the hope that Jesus Christ gives to those who give themselves to Him.



This year the attendance was close to 115. Hispanics rejoiced that they could come with their entire families to relax, have fun and worship the Lord in their mother language, Spanish. At the family time on Saturday, we had hay rides, canoeing, soccer and swimming at the pool. At the Talent Show in the evening, many people revealed their talents dancing, singing, acting and reciting poems. Families that participated are from South America, Central America and North America. God was honored through the event. Praise the Lord!

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