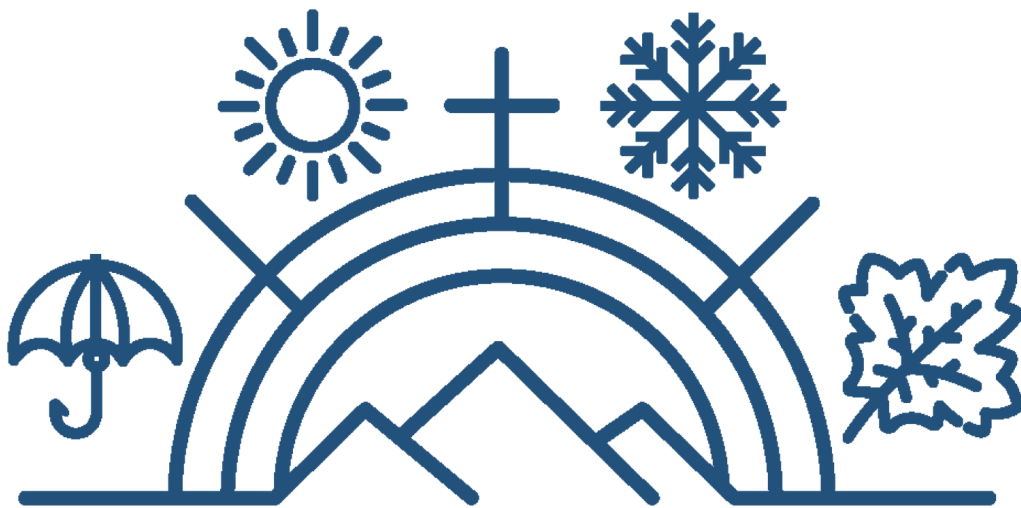




MOUNTAIN T.O.P.

2020 GRATITUDE REPORT



A SEASON FOR EVERYTHING

— ECC. 3:1-14 —

FAITH | TRANSFORMATION | CONNECTION | STEWARDSHIP

ALLEVIATE

SUBSTANDARD HOUSING: TO PROVIDE DIRECT SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT THAT ADDRESSES SEVERE HOUSING ISSUES IN OUR SERVICE AREA.

TO PROMOTE LIFESTYLES THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY CHOICES.

HEAL

DEVELOP

TO ENGAGE IN SOLUTIONS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR HOLISTIC AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GROWTH.

TO FOSTER GROWTH AMONG STAFF,
PARTICIPANTS, DONORS, AND THE COMMUNITY.

LEAD

EDUCATE

TO PROVIDE AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND PERSONAL GROWTH FOR ALL AGES.

REFLECTION OF...

45 YEARS OF MINISTRY

To reflect is to cast an image, ponder, or give to deep thought. My name is Lorena Bass, wife of the late George H. Bass, Founder of and Executive Director for the first 30 years of Mountain T.O.P. Ministries. I have loved 'the mountain' since I was 4 years old. That was 80 years ago when my father, Reverend O.B. Johnson, was one of five men who put money down to secure the property for the United Methodist Tennessee Conference which is known today as the Beersheba Springs United Methodist Assembly.

In the beginning years of the Mountain T.O.P. journey, there was a very active youth group who wanted to make a difference in their state of Tennessee. With their youth leaders and youth director, the Blakemore youth met, discussed, asked questions, and decided to make a trip to Hinton Rural Life Center in North Carolina to be a part of a workweek and watch and listen and find out how that service program worked. The trip was made, ideas were formed, and Mountain T.O.P. was given life, just like spring gives us new life and hope of new beginnings. Blakemore church leaders and parents asked how they could fund this ministry, and their youth director, George Bass, said, "Trust me."

The planning was tedious. Where do we work? We need a base camp! George knew that Beersheba Springs Assembly was the perfect place to start the Mountain T.O.P. ministry because he knew of the housing needs of the people who lived in Grundy County, Tennessee. In 1975, the first week of Mountain T.O.P. was held at Beersheba Springs Assembly. After two summers at Beersheba, more youth and adults wanted to be a part of Mountain T.O.P. and George asked for guidance and prayed for a place the ministry could call their own. One day while driving around on the mountain, he felt he was directed to Cumberland Pines in a place called Cumberland Heights. In 1978 a partnership was formed to purchase the Cumberland Pines Center. Tom Hayes, John Lynn, Reese Smith, Bob Sullins, George Miller, and George Bass bought the property.

I remember in the beginning years, the summers were hot. There was much to do from preparing the Cumberland Pines Camp to receive staff and volunteers, preparing the volunteers, training the staff, strengthening and developing relationships in the county, and raising money to support the ministry. Youth and adults came from all over the country to be part of the Mountain T.O.P. ministry. New ideas were formed; new plans were made to involve more people from the county and across the country. Could and should we expand into more counties than just Grundy? Seeing and believing in the growth, George, with the help of many others dedicated to the mission, established the first Board of Directors, and at that time, they officially established the 501c3 nonprofit status with the state of Tennessee.

In 1977, Brown Bannister gave permission for the ministry to deem the Mountain T.O.P. song as its song. What a true God moment this was to our ministry. In 1993, the partnership that purchased the Cumberland Pines Center gave the property to the ministry. Then in the late 90s, the next major milestone of building Camp Baker Mountain began. Dr. Sam and Linda Young from McMinnville, helped find and secure the new camp property. Thanks to Reed and Deeda Bradford and hundreds of volunteers, Camp Baker Mountain was built. The Bradfords came from Florida and lived in a trailer on the property for two years while the camp was built. They have true servant hearts and have been a vital part of the Mountain T.O.P. Community.

During the fall and winters, God gives all of us a chance to slow down, reflect, and make changes. What a wonderful plan, to have spring, a time of renewal and summer, a time to work, play, and enjoy just being who we are. The colors of fall energize us to think of new ideas, new plans, and to begin the process of change. The quiet of winter gives us the time to begin putting the new plans into place. Mountain T.O.P. has gone through many seasons of change over the past 45 years.

A HOPE FOR THE...

FUTURE OF MOUNTAIN T.O.P.

At different times throughout the life of the ministry, volunteers were housed in close to 10 different camps, serving families in 14 counties of the Cumberland Mountain region. It began with youth service projects at Beersheba in 1975 through 1977. Day Camp was added in 1983. The Adults in Ministry (A.I.M.) began in 1989, and the Spring Break Out (SBO) ministry for volunteer college groups began in 1997.

As George served as the Executive Director for 30 years, it was my calling and important to me to support my husband and both of our daughters in their calling to serve God through Mountain T.O.P. Ministries. Our oldest daughter, Trish Bass Holliday, Founding partner of Holliday | Kenning Inc., served on year-round staff for 17 years as the Associate Executive Director. Our youngest daughter, Gail Bass Castle, Sole Proprietor of Castle Counseling Center, served on year-round staff for 15 years as the Director of A.I.M. Trish, among many other important program developments, built and developed from George's original vision, the summer staff training program into a 'state of the art' leadership and management program for young adults serving as summer staff. Many staff alumni attribute their success in life and career to their summer staff training experience and summer staff job. Gail directed the A.I.M. program and in 1998, established the partnership with the USDA Rural Housing program. This partnership continues to allow the ministry to secure state government funds for housing needs and projects for Grundy County residents.

In 2005, Ed Simmons became the 2nd Executive Director and courageously led the ministry for the next 15 years and into its 45th year of life. Now, at the leaving of Ed, Julie Willems Keel is the interim Executive Director. The Board of Directors is now searching for the next Executive Director. The ministry has not skipped a beat, even during the summer of 2020, when the ministry for the first time in 45 summers, could not receive volunteers into its camps due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Even so, the year-round and summer staff continued on with the ministry in partnership with the people of Cumberland Mountains, just on a much smaller scale.

As we come into the 46th year, it is a new day, a new chapter in Mountain T.O.P.'s history. There is no doubt in my mind and heart the mission and vision, to serve in partnership with the people of the Cumberland Mountain region, will continue to strengthen and change lives, because this is God's ministry. As you can glean from these reflections, Mountain T.O.P. depends on the year-round staff, the board of directors, the seasonal and summer staff, the summer, fall, and spring volunteers, the partnerships with individuals and families in the community, partnerships with faith-based and government agencies, and the multiple funding sources from individual donors, businesses, corporations, and foundations. Without any one of these entities, the ministry would not have thrived for 45 years. Please continue your involvement, in whatever way possible, so that what seemed to be a mission impossible in 1975, continues to be a mission thriving and growing into the next decade of service and partnership. The need to serve and partner is still great.

Written with Love,

Lorena Johnson Bass

Wife of George H. Bass, founder of Mountain T.O.P.

STORIES OF...

SUMMER STAFF

With no campers coming to Mountain T.O.P. this past summer, the month and a half that the summer staffers spent at camp looked much different than ever before. Summer staff had the opportunity to complete major home repair projects, grow in faith and develop leadership skills. One of the projects that were given to the Program Managers and Directors this summer was filming various video projects for Mountain T.O.P. to share with the community about various things regarding our ministry! I worked on a team with Caroline and Hallie Marie to create a video that would tell the story of Mountain T.O.P., the work that we do, and the impact that we have. WOW! What a task! As we began brainstorming, we quickly came to the conclusion that there was no one better than the community members of the service area to tell the Mountain T.O.P.'s story. We quickly began contacting community members, asking if we could interview them and hear about the ways that Mountain T.O.P. has affected their lives and their community. There is nothing like sitting with people and hearing their stories, hearing the ways that the mission and ministry of Mountain T.O.P. have shown through in the community. It was so wonderful to hear about the core principles of Mountain T.O.P.'s ministry,



It was like empowerment and partnership, actually shining through the lives of the people that we work with. I am so grateful I had the experience to work on these video projects over the summer, not just because of the amazing conversations I got to have with members of the Mountain T.O.P. community, but also because I learned very practical skills in terms of lighting, sound, and video editing.

Chad, a member of Support Staff who has experience in these areas, was so helpful to all of us as we began working on the project. For many of us, including myself, it was the first time we had ever worked on a project like this. I learned simple things like where to place a camera while you are recording and how to ask good interview questions, but I also learned more complex skills like sound and video editing using different software platforms. I am grateful to know that going forward in life, if I am ever tasked with completing a video project, I will be more capable and confident due to my experiences at Mountain T.O.P. This experience is just one of the many ways that we had a great summer even though it looked much different than ever before, and Praise God for that!

Liz Murray

Liz Murray | Former Summer Staffer

IMPACT OF...

SUMMER STAFF



I have learned that we all go through every season. Maybe not in the same way or at the same time, but we all have experience with each of them. And because we are all different, we respond to seasons differently and some may take longer to reflect on a certain season than others

-Rachel, Service Project Ministry Coordinator



100%

of summer staff after the summer said they make an effort to understand and engage with people who are different than them.



The most rewarding part of my time on staff is what I learned about myself. I learned about the environments where I thrive most, how I feel loved, and what I can do to better myself. I also learned that meaningful connections are so important and so good for the soul.

-Olivia, Service Project Ministry Coordinator

96%

know themselves better, because of their experience on summer staff

5

video projects completed by teams of summer staff



24

worships designed and led by summer staff

STORIES OF...

HOME REPAIR



This summer we worked with Mrs. H and her husband to work on a new wheelchair ramp that was approximately thirty-three feet long. This ramp was important for this family because Mrs. H's husband is getting older and is having trouble walking up and down the stairs. The stairs were a challenge for our group to build because the position of the steps and the distance we needed to make the ramp caused there to be little room for a walkway for some who walked down the steps. Despite this issue though, we tried to make as much space as possible for a walkway.

Another difficulty we had during this project was that Mrs. H had recently buried one of her chihuahuas very close to where our ramp needed to be. Thankfully, we avoided building over top of the burial, but when working on one of the two landings on the ramp, we had to be very cautious as to not step directly on the gravesite. Overall, this project was successful. The weather was not ideal but we still found ways to work efficiently in the rain.

After this project was complete, Mrs. H said she was excited to see her husband be able to get out of the house better.

Rachel Matherly

Rachel Matherly | Former Summer Staffer



IMPACT OF HOME REPAIR



69

families served through
Day Camp & home repair

4,256

volunteer hours devoted to
minor and major home
repair projects



13

safe entries and exits
repaired in 2020



"It was great coming back to meet up with important people that Mountain T.O.P. put in my life, and having the opportunity to serve another family in the county with my old friends."

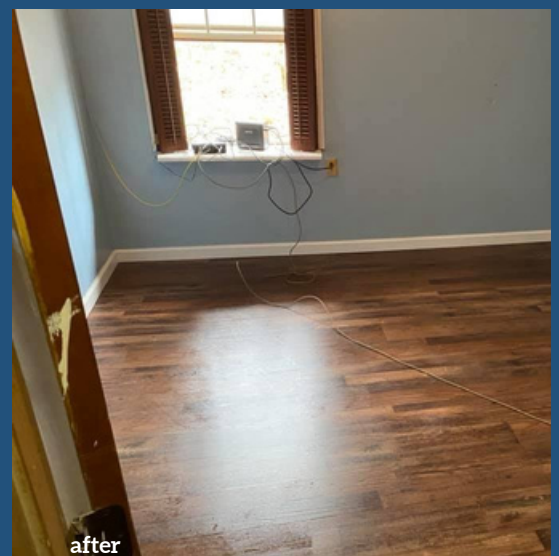
-Danny, Fall AIM participant & Former Summer Staffer

13

Major Home Repair Projects
completed in 2020.



before



after

STORIES OF...

FRONT- YARD DAY CAMP

Mrs. C has lived in her home in Tracy City, TN for 34 years. She has 11 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild, all of whom live nearby. She lives with her husband, son, and grandson. What Mrs. C likes most about living in her neighborhood is that it's good to walk in, it's nice and quiet, and people are friendly. She loves the community feel of Tracy City and that there is always something to do. She also loves the presence of Christianity in the area. Mrs. C and her family attend Plainview Community Church, which she was very excited to return to when it reopened! One of her granddaughters also stays with them on the weekends, which her grandson loves. Her grandson is eight years old and attends Tracy City Elementary. He misses school and being with his friends, since COVID, but the family has been trying hard to provide some fun activities during this time. They have a boat, which the family loves to take out to the water occasionally. Her grandson, Ed, was super excited to have day camp at his house this summer. We learned about things like perseverance, purpose, creativity, and gratitude. Mrs. C would get to sit on the porch and watch as Ed played with us. Ed loved playing hide and seek around his yard when we would finish our curriculum early. He also enjoyed playing with our bubble wand from our bucket-of-fun. Ed enjoyed doing the fish take-home craft and he was so proud when he showed us the next day. Ed took a few days to warm up, but by the end of the week, we got to see his true, happy, and confident self. We are so thankful for our week with Ed and Mrs. C and are hoping he will be a part of our front yard day camp next year!

Carissa Dagon

Carissa Dagon | Former Summer Staffer



IMPACT OF DAY CAMP



100+

unique children and youth
served through front yard
day camp

5

number of opportunities
for literary enhancement
each week

5

craft packets given to each
child each week

12

virtual field trips led by
community members



MOUNTAIN T.O.P. AND...

COVID-19

infinite

number of COVID cases avoided because we chose not to have campers

~70

meetings held virtually



29

planning documents to redesign programs

24

worships designed and led by summer staff



"I think that the most rewarding aspect of being on staff this summer was being able to work with families despite a pandemic going on. People still need us, even more now and I'm glad we were able to be here to continue the relationships with those in the counties."

- Jeremiah, 2020 Summer Staff

THANK YOU!

BUILDERS CLUB

THE BUILDERS CLUB IS OUR GROUP OF MONTHLY DONORS. THEY ARE A VITAL PART OF
KEEPING MOUNTAIN T.O.P. MOVING FORWARD IN OUR MISSION!

JACQUELINE ALBRO
RYAN & JILL ANDERSON
JAY & DIANNE AUBUCHON
TONY BRAWNER
ELISE BURNS
ANDY BURROUGHS
EMILY CHADWICK
STEVEN CLICK
KERI CRESS
REED & DEEDA BRADFORD
MARLA DOEHRING
KELLY & AARON DUNNILL
LAURIE & JOEL DURHAM
DEANNE & SEAN EVERTON
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LAURA GIFFORD
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ERINN & PAUL HAYNES
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CONNIE HOWARD
ALEXA HULSEY
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SADIE JONES
ROBERT KILGORE

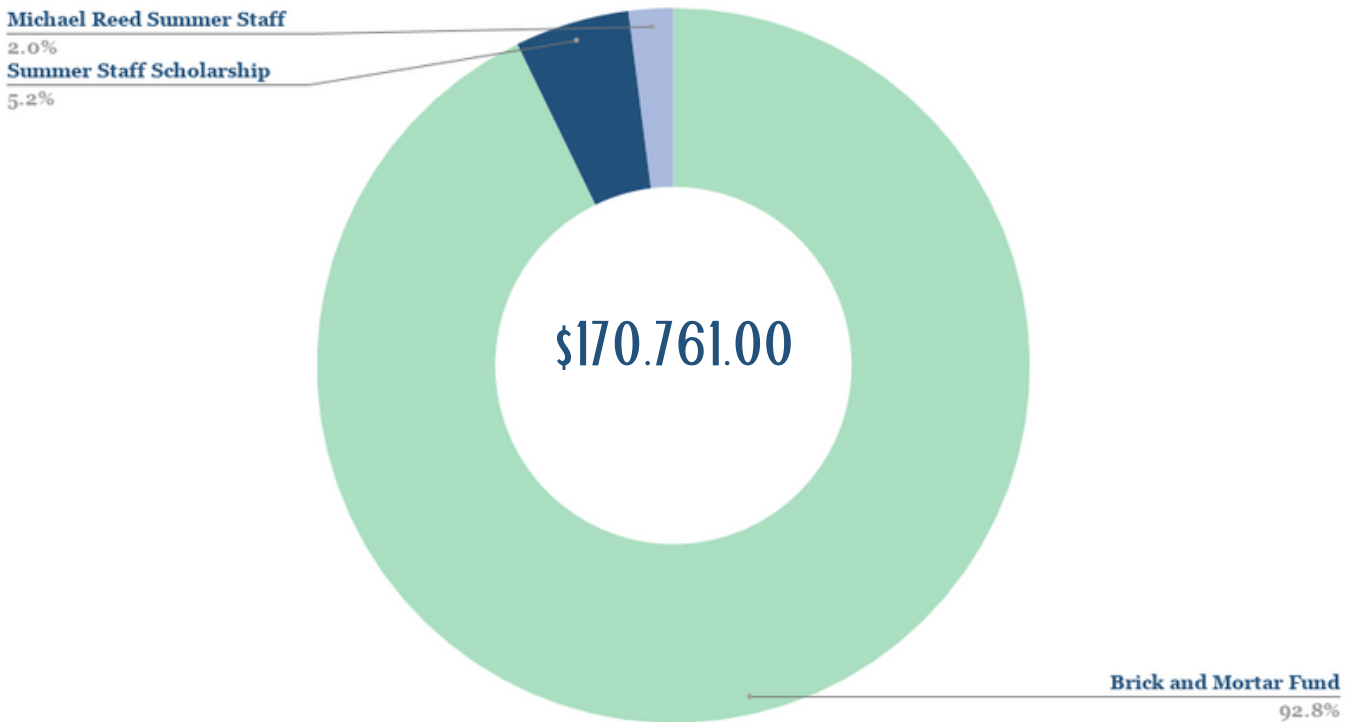
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LANCE PATRICK
RICH PEACHEY
JOHN PHILLIPS
CHARLES PHILLIPS
NATHAN RHINEHEIMER
BRIAN RICHARDS
GAVIN RICHARDSON
JOHN & ELIZABETH ROBINSON
TONY & PEGGY SAVAIANO

2020

FINANCIALS

2020 Breakdown of Endowments



2020 STAFF BOOK STUDY PICKS

- CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS | TOD BOLSINGER
- WHAT YOU ARE GETTING WRONG ABOUT APPALACHIA | ELIZABETH CATTE
- I'M STILL HERE: BLACK DIGNITY IN A WORLD MADE FOR WHITENESS | AUSTIN CHANNING BROWN
- THE COLOR OF LAW: A FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF HOW OUR GOVERNMENT SEGREGATED AMERICA | RICHARD ROTHSTEIN



MOUNTAIN T.O.P.
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Why, after 45 years, do we still find it important to repair—and possibly—build, homes? Why do we still go to meet people at their homes? We know that the quality of a person's or family's physical environment will affect their social, emotional, and mental well-being. Join us in 2021 as we explore how health starts at home.

