“I am very thankful for such remarkable parents who stand firm for Adventist education.”

—Nathalie Borges
Molding Lives Through Adventist Education

This issue is particularly focused on Adventist education. I have enjoyed reading the articles contained within these pages, and I trust you will also be blessed.

Once again I have been inspired with a sense of gratitude for this wonderful system for discipling young people that the Lord has given to our Church. A hallmark of Adventism is ministry to the whole person—physical, mental, and spiritual development. Christian education has always been a vital component of the strategy to mold the lives of young people.

The challenge we face, however, is that most Adventist young people are not able to attend an Adventist school for a variety of reasons. A principal reason is the cost of providing this ministry of education. Even though we try to contain expenses in as many ways as possible and heavily subsidize the education system through denominational channels, an Adventist education remains unattainable for 70–75% of our children and youth.

Because of these challenges, Florida Conference is looking at ways to meet the needs of families who cannot afford Adventist education. Recently, I reviewed a proposal for growing an endowment to provide for worthy students in Florida Conference. The dream is to create a process whereby our children and grandchildren will be assured the opportunity to be nurtured and educated in an Adventist school—at both the elementary and secondary levels. This discussion will soon be brought to the Conference Executive Committee for review.

As we continue to look for ways to minister to our children and provide for their spiritual, mental, and physical development until the Lord returns, I believe our Father will lead and guide us. Thank you for being an advocate for our most precious treasure—our children—and thank you for praying for God’s direction as we look for ways to permanently provide for their nurture and development in these insecure times.

The Borges family of Orlando received the 2009 Literature Evangelist Family of the Year award for book sales totaling $203,889. Congratulating them for this outstanding accomplishment are Florida Conference President Mike Cauley, second from right, and Publishing Director Joe Holloway, right.

Gilberto Borges, receiving plaque, led the family with sales of $115,957. Silvie, his wife, followed with $72,520 while daughter Nathalie and son Wallace sold a combined total of $15,612 through the MagaBook program.
Journey Reflections
One Student’s Thoughts on Adventist Education

“Canvassing opened my eyes to the reality of the world as my faith was tested daily…. The MagaBook program is a great way to help pay for Adventist education.”

lean on for support. It’s great to have friends who share the same passion for Christ so we can uplift each other in times of need.

My favorite part about GMMA was the chapel programs, especially the fun and energetic song services. I grew much closer to God in the two years I was there because the students and staff had such a passion for Christ. The God-fearing teachers inspired me to have a close relationship with Jesus.

My math teacher, Veon Stewart, always had great worship thoughts before every class. She also explained math in an easy and fun way that everyone could understand. I greatly appreciated her kindness and patience with me. Her office door was always open when I sought help on my math homework.

Following my sophomore year, I decided to join the summer MagaBook program. Canvassing opened my eyes to the reality of the world as my faith was tested daily whenever I walked up to strangers trying to sell them message or health books. Truly, the MagaBook program is a great way to help pay for Adventist education.

At the end of the summer, my family moved to Orlando where I started my junior year at Forest Lake Academy (FLA). Here, I continued working with the MagaBook program which is offered as part of the school’s work/study program under the direction of Florida Conference. The only problem was that my school schedule conflicted with the work shifts to sell MagaBooks.

Knowing I needed to help pay for a Christian education, my mom made a remarkable decision. She drove me around our neighborhood for two hours every day after school so that I could sell MagaBooks and earn money toward my tuition.

I was surprised at the outcome as my school bill was paid in full every month. God provided the right people for me to contact, and I was able to raise the amount needed. I soon realized if I wanted a Christian education, God would find a way as long as I would put forth personal effort as well.

Finally, my senior year arrived, and it was the craziest in my life! My parents had finally allowed me to go on a mission trip to Mexico (see Generation Change on page 12) with other FLA students. It was a life-changing experience as I witnessed, first-hand, what life was like outside the United States.

For as long as I can remember, I was taught that being a Christian means serving others. As I participated in the Vacation Bible School program, preached at an evangelistic meeting, and helped build neighborhood churches, I truly grasped the meaning of Acts 20:35, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” I felt fulfilled to put my education and faith into practice!

I am so grateful for Adventist schools which provide opportunities for students to serve others and to share their faith. One thing I enjoyed most about going to Adventist schools was starting every class with prayer. We can’t do anything in life without God’s help, as He is the One who helps us succeed in everything!

As I approached graduation day, I reflected on my journey in Adventist schools. I know I wouldn’t have had the same experiences in other environments. It is my dream to attend an Adventist university, and I know God will help me find a way. This summer, I began earning money for college by joining the Florida Conference MagaBook team working in Miami.

After all the work and perseverance to achieve a Christian education, I am convinced it was well worth it! I am very thankful for such remarkable parents who stand firm for Adventist education. With their guidance, I have decided to follow Jesus. Now, I pray for His continued leading toward a higher education within His will.

Nathalie Borges, left, was always inspired by her best friend, Alecca Lazaga, during their nine years in school together.
Forgive me in advance for using a Broadway tune as an analogy for this school year at Greater Miami Adventist Academy (GMAA). You know the one, from The King and I, “Getting to know you; getting to know all about you.” That’s been pretty much the theme here.

First of all, through the blessings of God, we have started on Phase One of our new construction project. This includes a new perimeter fence, two new soccer fields, a new softball field, two outdoor full basketball courts, two tennis courts, and a new children’s playground.

Our surrounding community will certainly be getting to know us better through our new look, but not only through the new look. We are going to be using these new sports facilities as an outreach mission to invite the community to events and also as a recruiting method to bring in new students.

Second, an integral part of our mission has always been to be involved in our community. For the past eight years, we have sponsored a blood drive with the Community Blood Centers four times each school year. The past two years, we had among the highest percentage increase in donations of any public or private school in Miami-Dade County. This year, we held several school-wide community service days—the most recent on May 6—establishing partnerships with Hands on Miami; Habitat for Humanity; and Champions of Truth, the drama mission for Miami Temple Church.

Also, we will serve our community in a major way this coming school year through a partnership with Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences. We will offer an academic program that will lead to a Nursing Assistant or a Medical Assistant certificate. The program will be offered to all sophomore students who have at least a 3.0 or 3.5 GPA, respectively. We view this as another way in which we will be helping our students by giving them the means to establish a career.

As blessed as GMAA is to have all these projects and programs, truly our greatest blessing is seeing our young people give their lives to Christ—getting to know Him better. Our highest goal is to reach as many young people as possible with the message of God’s love for them. Through God’s leading in our Weeks of Prayer, 13 students have been baptized this school year alone.

As we focus on our new programs and our new projects, it is our prayer at GMAA that we will always keep sight of the real purpose of Christian education and that is to make a positive impact on our students for the kingdom of heaven.
Forest Lake Academy Students Choose To Just Do Something

BY ELISABETH NIEDERMAN

Forest Lake Academy’s (FLA) spring Week of Prayer wrapped up on a note of service when students chose to Just Do Something. The school-wide community service day featured youth doing projects from painting and light yard work to playing with orphans and giving food to the homeless. These teenagers, spurred by the simple message, “It is better to give than to receive,” found in Acts 20:35, eagerly reached out to their neighbors to lend a helping hand.

FLA students assembled at 7:45 Friday morning, loaded onto buses, and headed out to their various service projects. Anthony Simon helped Coalition for the Homeless pass out pizza and soda in downtown Orlando. “It was meaningful to see their faces light up,” he reports. “If they were sleeping, we left the pizza beside them. That way, they could wake up to a good day.”

Austin Beckner and Jeremy Gaines helped paint an elderly woman’s home with members from Meals on Wheels. “It felt good to do something for her,” Austin remarks. “I had fun,” agrees Jeremy.

Genise Browne spent the day working with Clean Up Orlando. She states, “We made it a little bit better, even if there still is more to do.”

Even FLA staff joined the spirit of giving. Yanira Palomo, the school librarian, went with students to Orlando Union Rescue Mission. “We cleaned their property: raked leaves, trimmed bushes, and took care of their playgrounds,” she explained. “A few of us spent a couple hours playing with some of the children in the nursery.”

Palomo smiled before continuing, “It was an opportunity to share.”

Nathalia Lima went with another group of students to The Carpenter’s House for Children, a haven for abandoned, displaced, underprivileged, and medically needy kids. Pat and Linda, the parents of the home, have sheltered international children for more than 10 years.

Nathalia had a special interest in going to help because she was adopted from Brazil 11 years ago. “I thought it was really great that these kids had someone who was willing to care for them as their own. I also had someone like Pat and Linda to take care of me before I was adopted by an awesome family,” she explains.

For students who participated in Just Do Something, the day was about more than simply pulling weeds and trimming bushes. “It’s about creating change,” says Anthony Simon. “When they see us, we give them hope, because we show them people still care.”

Ashley Gomez teamed with other students to help paint an elderly woman’s home.
With record numbers attending the General Conference Session in Atlanta this summer, fellow believers from many parts of the world will come to Florida. Perhaps they’ll visit our churches, Camp Kulaqua, a Florida Hospital campus, one of our schools, or the Florida Conference office. Thank you for making these guests welcome in the Sunshine State.

Wherever they stop, we trust that a warm Christian smile will meet them. For those who visit the Florida Conference office, we will share this issue of Florida Focus. We anticipate the stories and photographs on these pages will remind each reader of the special joy that comes from being a part of God’s family.

—Mike Cauley, President, Florida Conference

Seventy-five members and guests of North Lake Church (in Lake County) enjoyed a Sunday Strawberry/Tea Fellowship at Marilyn and Rus Aldridge’s home in Umatilla where participants made new friends, sampled vegan desserts, and received Christian literature.

Keela Carr, a Forest Lake Church member, Apopka, walked across the United States in the summers of 2008 and 2009 to say thanks to military veterans and raise awareness for the needs of the homeless among them.

Principal Janet Ledesma enjoys a light moment with eight of the 525+ students who attend Forest Lake Education Center in Longwood. Florida Conference’s network of 31 schools includes two senior academies and five junior academies. The Conference also oversees 13 day care centers operated by schools or local churches.
A Warm Welcome to Summer Visitors

Meet some of our 60,000+ members in Florida Conference

Avon Park Church member Grace Rutt celebrated her 104th birthday with employees at Florida Hospital Heartland in Sebring where she volunteers two days each week in the cafeteria.

Mercy and Félix Millán, Clermont Church members, led in planting two new congregations in Florida Conference. Mercy, and then Félix, became Adventists when Félix was playing professional baseball in Japan where he won a batting crown after an All-star career with the Atlanta Braves and New York Mets.

A group of Adventist history enthusiasts from Avon Park Church took a field trip to a quiet cemetery 20 miles away in Bowling Green after studying the life of George I. Butler, former Florida Conference President and twice-elected General Conference President. “Here, George and Lentha Butler are buried, sleeping in Jesus until the Lord calls them home on resurrection morning,” said Associate Church Pastor Kameron DeVasher, (hand on tombstone next to wife, Emilie).

Follow the Bible: Florida Conference employees, friends, family, and church members (above) gathered June 11 in the Winter Park headquarters to welcome the arrival of the large Bible that traveled around the world before arriving at the General Conference Session in Atlanta. Bagpipe player Joe MacKenzie played Amazing Grace as Mike Cauley, Conference President, and Carmen Rodriguez, Executive Secretary, followed with the Bible that featured chapters translated into 66 languages. MacKenzie was touched as he sensed God’s presence play out in his part of the moving event. “The purpose of this experience is to highlight and emphasize the importance of God’s Word,” Cauley told the assembled group. “The Bible is still the most precious book in all the world.”
Dean Jemson—a Tribute To Longevity

Dean Jemson gave 26 years and nearly 6,000 volunteer hours to the Port Charlotte Library. At his 100th birthday party, Alison Lane, Librarian Supervisor, said, “Dean is a faithful and hard-working volunteer. He always greets us with a smile and a hug.”

Dean Jemson was a picture of health as he approached his 100th birthday on April 4. He celebrated by flying a Cessna 172 and driving his restored 1922 Ford Model T to a party held in his honor. Later in the week, he entered the hospital with pneumonia and, on April 15, a stunned community learned of his death.

Willard D. “Dean” Jemson was born April 4, 1910, on Victoria Island, British Columbia. He attended Walla Walla College in College Place, Washington, where he met Ruby Gish. They married in 1931, and he became a U.S. citizen seven years later.

A five-decade printing career began for Dean when he was hired as a linotype foreman at a Washington newspaper plant. He later moved east to manage Atlantic Union College Press in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. In 1956, he became manager of Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University) Press in Berrien Springs, Michigan. His skills and administrative abilities led to an invitation to serve as president of Philippine Publishing House in Manila.

Dean’s next stop took him to the Indonesian Publishing House where he was president for five years before he and Ruby returned to the States. During the next three years, he was Assistant to the General Manager of the Review and Herald Publishing Association at the former Takoma Park, Maryland, headquarters.

Finally, it was Florida’s west coast that beckoned the world-traveling couple to build their retirement home in Port Charlotte. Soon, Dean and Ruby began volunteering at the Adventist Community Service Center, the Mid-County Library and the Port Charlotte Library. After Ruby died in 2000, Dean continued working at the Port Charlotte Library where it is estimated he donated nearly 6,000 hours of volunteer service during the past 26 years. Alone at age 90, Dean became active in the Veteran Motor Car Club of America as he restored his 1922 Ford Model T. During the five-year restoration process, he became close friends with Paul Simmers, an antique car buff who said at the Car Club’s 100th birthday party for Dean, “I’ve never had a friend like him.”

The folks at the Port Charlotte Library went so far as to initiate a proclamation from the Charlotte County Board of Commissioners to declare April 4, 2010, as Dean Jemson Day. One of the inscriptions as to why this day was set aside reads, “Whereas, Dean is an inspiration to us all, serving as an example of how to live an active and meaningful life; and our community and its libraries have been enriched by Dean’s dedicated service.” Recognized by the community as a perfect gentleman, an informed conversationist, an astute businessman, a fearless adventurer, and a remarkable man, Dean served his last Sabbath as a faithful deacon at Port Charlotte Church a few weeks before he died. Here, a final 100th birthday party was scheduled for April 11 with his church family. Sadly, a memorial service was conducted, instead, on April 25, and the party was placed on hold until eternity.

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“Tribute to Longevity”

Dean Jemson’s Secrets to Long Life
1. Stay out of hospitals.
2. Eat regularly and sparingly.
3. Keep busy. Always find something to do.
4. Give back to your community—volunteer your time.
5. Read food labels carefully.
6. Don’t dwell on the negative.
7. Avoid debt.
8. Live at peace with all men.
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For more information, contact Florida Conference Office of Education: alison.stovall@floridaconference.com or 407.644.5000 x145

date
October 22–24, 2010
Opening Session - Friday evening

location
CAMP KULAQUA
High Springs, Florida

Register online: www.campkulaqua.com
IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK...

BY MARK BOND

It’s been nearly 25 years since I worked at Camp Kulaqua in the piney woods of North Florida, but the memories are still vivid. For me, summer camp was more than just a once-a-year excursion; it was the beginning of my commitment to our church.

I started attending Camp Kulaqua as a first grader. I remember my counselors by name. I remember the staff from the waterfront and horse barn. I remember the musicians who led us in singing by the campfire. And I remember the moment, there by the glowing embers, when I dedicated my life to service.

The fire that started burning in my heart some three decades ago as a camper is still glowing today. My involvement in our church’s summer camp programs gave me a sense of ownership in this church.

There, I learned that evangelism is more than an event that happens once every three or four years by sending out several thousand handbills to a church’s surrounding zip codes. Evangelism happens when you lend an ear to a young person whose parents are going through a divorce. Evangelism happens when you have a late-night, lights-out, sleeping bag discussion about why bad things happen to good people. Evangelism is more action verb than noun, and actions speak loudly to young people at camp.

Last year, while back in Florida visiting my parents, I was walking down a hallway in Florida Hospital when a young woman I didn’t immediately recognize approached me and asked, “Mark Bond?”

When she revealed her name, I immediately remembered her as a young camper who hadn’t been affiliated with our Church. Her parents had sent her to camp for several weeks while they were going through a separation. Her vivacious spirit had endeared her to the entire staff, and she became everyone’s “little sister.”

Today, she’s a Seventh-day Adventist and works at Florida Hospital. Her son now goes to the same camp that first introduced her to Jesus and to the church.

As the song says, “It only takes a spark to get a fire going…”

Mark Bond is communication director for Southwestern Union Conference. He lives with Conna, his wife, and their four children just outside of Keene, Texas. Article reprinted with permission from Southwestern Union Record, of which Mark Bond is editor.

SPECIAL SERMON DIRECTED TO FOUR NEW MEMBERS

BY NAOMI ZALABAK

On April 17, Robert Folkenberg, former General Conference President, 1990–1999, invited four newly baptized young people to join him on the platform of the Avon Park Church in preparation for the sermon. The audience became onlookers in a unique presentation as Folkenberg directed his entire sermon to the young people seated in front of him regarding their privileges and responsibilities as new members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

These young people are already involved in church activities. Bree Fautheree, who was baptized by Associate Pastor Kameron DeVasher, is an active member of the church’s birding club of which his father, Aubrey, is the leader. Folkenberg baptized the other three candidates: his grandchildren Michael, Kristi, and Matthew Jensen who had participated in a mission trip to Guatemala with their parents. Michael was also involved in the church’s DVD ministry that records church services for homebound and isolated members in the United States and overseas.

Folkenberg, is director of ShareHim, a Carolina Conference ministry through which hundreds of people from all walks of life are trained, equipped, and inspired to share the Gospel. Whether in their home church or around the world, people like the Jensen family are sharing the Gospel through what the ministry calls Evangeliving.
Leverage Your Gift

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• Are you aware that tax deductions are available for a gift of insurance?
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I was excited about going on my first mission trip and, especially, traveling out of the country for the first time without my parents. I had always wanted to see beyond the United States to other parts of the world.

I knew from day one this mission trip to Cancún, Mexico, would change my life forever! As I arrived in Mexico, I was shocked by the living conditions. The houses looked like cement shacks, and people were selling all sorts of things on the streets.

Because I was one of the few people in our group who spoke Spanish, I kept very busy helping kids, as well as adults. I preached on the first night of an evangelistic series and led the Vacation Bible School program held during the week of meetings. I deeply enjoyed singing praise songs and playing games with the children. Best of all was seeing two individuals give their lives to Jesus at the end of the series.

People in Mexico treated us like superstars, thinking we had the best in life. However, God used them to change my way of thinking. I was amazed at how happy they were even though they barely had a roof over their heads. They taught me to understand that real joy comes from God; not our possessions. Although I take things for granted, at times, such as clean water and comfortable shoes, I realized I am truly blessed with what I have.

What melted my heart the most in Mexico was when the children would race to our bus screaming, “The Americans are here!” We were always greeted with hugs and kisses. The farewell was also very emotional for me, because I made strong friendships with the youth at the host church. I know in my heart, however, that if I don’t see them again on this earth, I will definitely see them in heaven with our Lord Jesus Christ.