



A periodic look at how members of FUMC Delmar are putting their faith to work

MILESTONES

First United Methodist Church of Delmar

JANUARY 2007

www.delmarmethodist.org

THE MISSION MOVERS: FUMC's very own furniture delivery service makes better homes for the neediest in our community

Karen Pass, a professor of biology at SUNY/Empire State College, and her family have been members of First United Methodist Church for 29 years. They chose it for its strong education and mission programs.

While Karen has served on various committees throughout the years – including education, stewardship and staff parish – she finds mission service most rewarding because it gives her an opportunity for “hands-on ministry.” One of her most visible and successful ways of doing so is through the Mission Movers volunteer program, which operates out of the church.

Begun in 1997 as a way to collect furniture for refugee families, the group now runs a free pickup and delivery furniture program to provide furniture and household goods for people who badly need but can't afford it. The program only accepts donated items, giving people in the community an outlet for furniture and other household goods they no longer need.

Pickup and delivery!

Pass said Mission Movers involves a handful of mostly adult, and some youth, volunteers. They typically schedule one moving trip each week, usually making two or three differ-

ent stops. “When we know how many people and pickup trucks or vans are available at a specific time (and know what furniture we have or can get), we schedule our trips. For example, on our next trip we’ll be picking up a sofa and love seat from one person and kitchen table from another. We’ll be delivering the love seat to a single man. He also needs a full-size bed, but we just don’t have one right now.

The sofa and love seat will go to one family, and the table to another.”

The movers are also waiting for specific information about a family that lost their home to a fire. “As soon as they move into an apartment, we’ll provide as much furniture as we can,” she said.

“Most of the people in need of furniture are referred to us by social service workers, school nurses, the Red Cross, and members of the clergy,”

Pass said. “Our mission translates into helping to make a lodging a home, creating a place people are going to want to go to, and making homes better places for raising children, who often are at risk. For children in poverty, we offer something that other children take for granted: basic necessities. This improves their lives – and ours, as well.”

Many of those helped by Mission Movers live in inner city Albany. They include single mothers with young children; grandmothers caring for grandchildren whose parents are incarcerated; foster families with furniture needs; women moving from domestic violence shelters; men and women who are completing alcohol and substance abuse treatment programs and moving into apartments, and families who have been burned out of their homes.

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The Movers — in a moment of (relative) relaxation.

Milestones is a new publication from the Communications Team that will appear from time to time to showcase the ways FUMC is in ministry. If you have a suggestion for a group or topic we should cover, please contact Stephen Rice at 439-2629 or ricesw@hotmail.com.

The Mission Movers

(continued from front page)

“These are people who are falling through the cracks,” Pass explained. “For one reason or another, their needs can’t be fully met through social services.”

Often, the Mission Movers volunteers are offered small tokens of appreciation from those they help. Pass says those small acts of giving “tell a lot about what people must feel when they need help, and have so little to give in return.” She mentioned the time they delivered a sofa to a man, who then insisted that they stay and share his ice cream. “Even though we had two more stops that night, we had to stay and eat with him. People need to have a chance to give.”

On several occasions, Mission Movers has found families with major needs, who asked only for minimal help. At holiday time, the group has been able to assist them with food and gifts, or to connect them with other groups that wanted to “adopt” families.

Lasting impact

“We’ve kept in touch with some of these families,” Pass added. “One boy, the oldest of three children, was a preteen when we first encountered him. He is now in the gifted and talented program at SUNY Albany. His mom works three part-time jobs to keep the family financially solvent, but she feels that they are now okay. It is rewarding to know that we helped get them there!”

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Mission Movers has an e-mail list of volunteers, and maintains a monthly calendar on-line so that people can sign up for evening or Saturday moves. “When other people tell us that they want to help, we add them to our list,” Pass said.

Pass strongly believes that Mission Movers fills a very important role in the lives of many people – and not only those who receive the much-needed donations. She believes the volunteers also benefit. “We experience what it’s like for people who have substantial needs that they can’t meet

without help,” said Pass. “Not many things you’ll ever do in life can top the feeling that comes when a child who is so excited and grateful to receive her own bed wants to give you a hug!” She also recalled the young volunteer who helped his mom on moving trips telling her that he likes making

deliveries because “I like it when we make people happy!”

“I feel that my life is enriched when I’m able to provide just a bit of help to people who are struggling with life’s demands on a daily basis,” Pass said. “There are many other people who want to help, and through my involvement in mission programs of FUMC, I’ve been able to connect such people with opportunities for service.”

Mission Movers is one wonderful example of how people, like Karen, put their faith to work by walking it out into the community.

Want to help – either by becoming a volunteer, or by donating inventory? Ask Karen Pass, or any of the Mission Movers volunteers. They’ll even fit you into your own bright red “Mission Movers” tee shirt!

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