

They flew back on Thursday and later that day received the call that she has cancer. I don't know what type or what stage. She will be flown off the island for chemo and surgery. Obviously shaken and scared, the entire team prayed with both Maria and John.

On Friday afternoon, John and Maria came by the work site and are so amazed, grateful and overwhelmed with the progress to the point of being speechless. Maria has given permission for prayers requests to be sent out to all of our churches/pray warriors!

Having worked at the house at the beginning, and at dozens of other sites over the years, I can say that this couple was the most affected and discouraged that I have ever seen. The condition of the house was utterly appalling. It is compelling to see how a house (and the lives of those who lived there) can be transformed by the work of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission.

Walt spoke of a moving experience he had on a house the team worked on; he said, "I was very much moved by the response of a family to their 'last nail' ceremony. The resident had lost all hope and was physically ill over the fact that she did not think she would live to see her home repaired. It is now repaired, and she

now has that 'life is good' feeling back."

If you are interested in becoming involved in mission trips like this, visit www.unyumc.org/mission/vim to learn more about UNY Volunteers in Mission.

Snippets of how UNY churches are generous

"Soups every Jan., Feb., and Mar. - every Tuesday volunteers make many pots of soup and every Wednesday anyone in need can come and pick up a bag or two or more for free. This is a ministry Elm Park in Oneonta has sustained for 20 years."

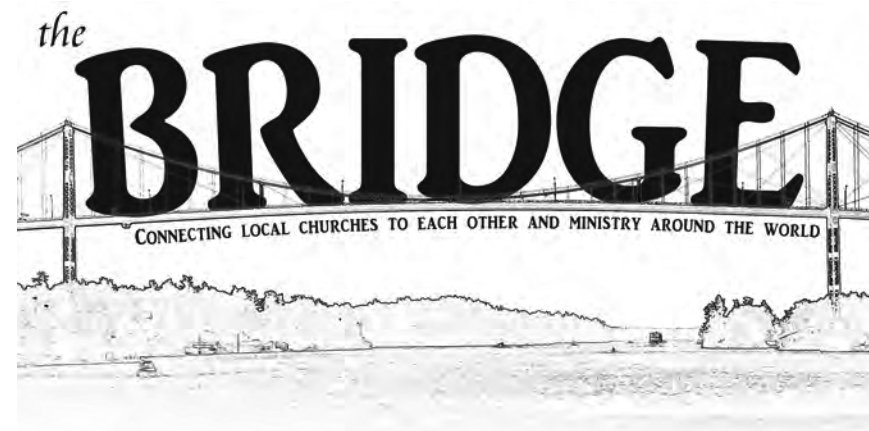
—Donna, Elm Park UMC

"Our church hosts a monthly community dinner, reads with local school children, sponsors tuitions for African students and sponsors both African and Hispanic congregations."

—Sharon, Aldersgate UMC

Food pantries, clothing, blessing bags, backpacks with school supplies—there are so many ways to be generous to communities in need. How is your church generous? We'd love to hear your stories. Visit our Facebook page and post your story in the comments of our post about generosity: <https://www.facebook.com/uppernewyork/>.

Visit <https://www.unyumc.org/mission/mission-central> to learn about ways that you can serve others.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

A look inside!

The Upper New York Conference is serving others near and far

Page 2

The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:

www.unyumc.org

The Upper New York Conference is serving others near and far

United Methodists have believed, from the beginning, that each of us is called to participate in the outreaching ministry of Jesus Christ. Putting our faith into action is at the very heart of our Christian calling. By volunteering to serve whether in your local church or beyond, your service can transform the lives of others. The Upper New York Conference has time and time again illustrated the commitment to serve. In this issue, we share just a couple of the uplifting stories of service demonstrated by UNY churches, laity, and clergy.

Faith Journey UMC's Mission Central Campus opens

By Shannon Hodson

In April 2016, Mike Jordan, the chairperson of Crossroad District's Faith Journey UMC's trustees, convinced members of his church that it was possible to transform a dilapidated, closed-down veterinary building into a beautiful space to be the new home for their Cradle & Beyond thrift shop that had been part of St. Andrew's UMC until the church closed. And that this could also be a place for mission outreach as well as fellowship and worship.

Once permits were granted and the



architect work was completed in Sept. of 2017, members of Faith Journey UMC began the journey of fixing up the building—a journey that involved thousands of hours of labor and tens of thousands of dollars in donations. Walls, ceilings, and floors had to be knocked down and rebuilt. Asbestos had to be removed. Electrical, heating, and plumbing had to be installed, and so much more.

Mike said, "Often I had to come on a Friday night and de-ice the floor for us to be able to come in the next morning to work."

Pastor Daniel Bradley was appointed to Faith Journey UMC on July 1, 2018, right in the middle of this massive project. He said, "When I arrived, there were no walls or floors and there weren't even ducts for heating."

Mike Jordan's vision became a reality. On Friday Nov. 8, 2019, Faith Journey UMC held a celebration of the opening of this once dilapidated building into a beautiful, bright community center that they call their Mission Central Campus. Visit <http://bit.ly/FaithJourneyMissionCentral> to read about the transformation of this space.

St. Croix mission trip—a moving Experience

By Roger Cullen

From Sept. 21-Oct. 5, 2019, eight people from Upper New York (UNY) joined a crew of 22 volunteers from throughout the Northeastern Jurisdiction and beyond on a mission trip to St. Croix. In all, our Team 32 worked on six

homes putting on finishing touches, starting new projects, and significant work on whole roofs. We worked in the Frederiksted area on homes for permanent residents who are seniors, or disabled, or dealing with significant health issues. Walt Mathias of UNY was the leader of this mission trip.

St. Croix has experienced a 30-year economic decline due to the primary employer, a refinery, closing. Now that the refinery is being brought back on line, there is hope for recovery, but resources both personal and municipal remain thin.

As often happens with slow disaster recoveries like this one in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, people become deeply discouraged, feeling abandoned and in some cases preyed upon by opportunistic or unqualified repair people. The teams learn to expect tentative acceptance by homeowners wary of new faces promising repairs. As the days wear on, that acceptance turns to joy as the work gets done, and deep gratitude as relationships blossom.

Linette Carlson of the New Mexico Annual Conference extended her stay on this mission trip and recounted how one struggling couple has been touched by the two teams this month (our team was Team 32 and the Team Linette joined was Team 33). The names have been changed in Linette's account for the purpose of confidentiality.

Linette said, "A number of us worked at the 'V' house or John and Maria's house. The good news is that Team 33 has been working all last week and will



be there all next week and progress is good. Tarps and old purlins removed, Existing T 1-11 is screwed down, new T 1-11 has been installed where needed, Facia is up, felt is down and we will finish the purlins tomorrow a.m. Once inspection is done... metal goes up! Yeah. New doors (3) are on site to install. A wall will be built in the large front opening and will have one of the new doors and window. New windows will be installed in the future and LLS is working on a grant to hire an electrician to completely reside the house. And yes there is a plan to power wash the entire inside of the house at some point.

Maria and John were sent to St. Thomas on Tuesday so Maria could have a biopsy on Wednesday (those who worked there know she was in pain and the left side of her face and jaw were swollen). She gave me permission to reach out to my church community for prayer and I prayed with her before she left. She said she believes in prayer, had tears in her eyes, and gave me a big bear hug.

Continued on page 4