

Trinity Presbyterian Church West Lebanon Receives National Recognition

by Candy Hunter, Trinity Presbyterian Church West Lebanon

Trinity was recognized by Union Presbyterian Seminary for their innovative ministry of nursing home VBS with receipt of the Louse McComb Award for congregations that are adults in the church and community.

In 2011, Trinity Presbyterian finished their fourteenth year of Vacation Bible School onsite at Williamsport Health and Rehabilitation. This heart-warming program takes the complete VBS program to the nursing and rehabilitation center. Seated at tables are deliberately mixed groups of Trinity students and nursing home residents. They work, sing, learn, and play side by side.

The program is blessed by and completely dependent on a large group of very compassionate buddies - adults from Trinity who also mix themselves into the table groups, watching especially for nursing home residents who might need a little extra help. Any resident who is unable to complete a craft, or play a game is never left out - one of the buddies will see to it, through nods and eye contact, everyone present is participating. For non-verbal residents, the eyes and smiles show their enjoyment of all the hubbub going on around them.

It is a typical VBS schedule:

- As participants arrive, their nametag gets a daily attendance sticker and is



pinned on them. An opening of pray, greeting and singing begins the day. We find that action songs are wonderful.

- Next a lesson is presented by our storyteller; many of the residents will nod and smile while listening - they remember the good old Bible stories. Residents and children alike enjoy the lesson-related craft. Coloring, stickers and small glued projects are the favored crafts.
- Usually there is more singing before revised table games like Concentration, question and answer, table top bowling, and a fish pond are enjoyed.
- Nursing home staff then furnishes cookies and kool-aid.
- After the crumbs are cleared, tables are wiped and hands are cleaned, we proceed to a large group game involving the entire room of VBS attendees. Some of our residents are very active participants in games such a daisy (a more positive version of hangman) or word building. Often we have teams, or everyone is a team against the leader. The seniors enjoy the youthful energy exhibited in active games and appreciate the younger eyes that help them play more detailed games. Everyone looks forward to the last day when they know that Hallelujah! Bingo is coming. Fish crackers are used for markers, and winners shout out "Hallelujah!" rather than "bingo".
- As the clock tells us that our time together is over, nametags are collected, crafts re-connected to crafters, and everyone quiets for a word of prayer before departing.

Trinity's purpose in applying for this award was to spread the word, hoping that others would copy this very rewarding program. Recognition from UPS is truly a blessing as the resulting feature articles and notices will help accomplish that goal.