



# Mission UpReach Newsletter

## Campaign success!

By: Phil Waldron, CEO  
Mission UpReach, Inc.

We have good news to report on our year end fundraising campaign. Thanks to many, many people who pledged and donated money to our year end campaign fund, we made our goal by the end of January. As with past campaigns, we haven't yet received all of the pledged funds but should receive them over the next nine months prior to our 2023 Year End Campaign beginning.

These funds are essential to our being able to operate the many ministries and programs that Mission UpReach manages. In fact, most of the donations that we receive in a year are given or pledged through our year end campaign. We want to thank all of the people who have made this success possible.

I have entitled this note to you, "Campaign Success" because we are thankful to God for His having blessed us with a successful campaign. And secondly, we are thankful to you for having contributed to helping us make our goal.

Last year was the most difficult year of our life, both personally and organizationally. We met challenges that made all of our other previous struggles seem light and

non-consequential. We are thankful to be looking at a new year with new hope of more success.

In spite of the difficulties that we encountered last year, we had some operational successes. One of those, among several that are near and dear to my heart, is in the area of church planting. It had been several years since we had successfully helped to plant a new church. However, in 2023 we were successful in helping to plant three new churches that are functioning well. This year we hope to plant three more and next year even more. Please keep us in your

prayers. I am constantly reminded of what the Lord said to Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:1, "...Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." Or even what Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Thank you for prayers and financial contributions. Thank you for making it possible for us to be here leading this important work. We are deeply grateful for you. May God bless us this year with exactly what He wants to accomplish for His kingdom in our part of the world.

**\$650,000!**  
**Challenge Fund Opportunity**

Every \$ Donated before Dec 31st  
will be matched by one of our  
generous patrons.

**GIVE NOW** **x2**  
to multiply the effect of  
your contribution.

# Campamento La Cruz

That's the name of our annual Bible Camp. Every year for the past 9 years we have dedicated the first weeks of January to Bible Camp for children. Ty Ford, director of Camp Deer Run in East Texas played a significant role in helping us get camp off the ground and for establishing a balanced environment of fun and learning about God. As the years have passed, the spirit of camp has infected many of our young people who are now serving as camp leaders. One of the tenants of Camp Deer Run that we have adopted is that the camp leaders are young adults. Why? First, it's a necessary requirement to keep up with the children. Second, the children look up to those closest in age as role models. They can see themselves becoming like the role models who are serving them. This has been an amazing thing to witness, and the fruit has been abundant. We always offer our camp slots to the local church first and then we invite the children who are participants in our DESEO program. In the beginning, it was really challenging to find parents who were willing to allow their children (most of whom have never spent a night away from home) to leave home and spend a week with us. And we still must face that with new families. In fact, this year one mother said it like this: "Camp? I've only heard about camp in the movies." Generally, when a group of children from a specific community return from camp and start talking about it, the other children and their parents begin to have more confidence in the safety of camp. This year we hosted a total of 166 children ages 8 to 18 years of age. Each week we hosted a specific age group starting with ages 8 to 11 years of age; 12 to 14 years of age; and 15 to 18 years of age. We are happy to report that we had only a few minor injuries and even fewer sick ones. The best news is that we had a total of 13 baptisms in the second and third week. Our theme this year was GPS, and the theme verse was John 14:6,

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

The Sunday following the third week of camp, our local congregation has a camp celebration time after worship. We usually have one of the groups share a skit they developed while at camp, we have some children talk about what they like the most, and we share a video highlighting the various activities of the week. We invite the children and their parents and this year we had 305 people in attendance, 108 of



them children. Since they come to our worship, it was fitting that the theme for the sermon was the same as camp. It was a powerful opportunity to share the good news that Jesus is the way to the Father. We had cake at the end and had the opportunity to meet, greet and welcome our many visitors. We pray their lives will continue to be impacted by camp for years to come.

I must mention how proud we are of our leadership team. The director of camp is Carlos Umaña, a young man who has been working with Mission UpReach in various roles for 8 years. Carlos started out on our DESEO team and is now a member of our church planter's team. His role as camp director is not minor as it requires planning that begins for the next year as soon as they return from camp. Our DESEO team works at camp as cabin leaders and assistants as well as several volunteers who serve in various roles, including the kitchen staff. Most children who have had the privilege of experiencing camp long to have a position in the future as camp staff. The staff spend 3 weeks at the very rustic camp we rent with a day of recovery between camp weeks. This day is generally spent washing some very dirty clothes and making plans for the following week. Each one of them considers it an honor and privilege to be a part of our camp staff.



# MUR Employee Spotlight

## Meet Kevin Velis.

We are thrilled to introduce you to our newest staff member, Kevin Velis. Kevin is originally from El Salvador, and he is a recent graduate of the Baxter Institute in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. We first met Kevin when he participated in a Mission UpReach CREO Bible intensive in El Salvador. Later, Kevin spent his 6 months of practicum with us just before graduation. Kevin is a passionate evangelist, song leader, and he loves photography. He will be serving on our Church Planter's Team. Kevin will also bring much talent and passion to our local church as a member.



# ESPERO ready for a new year

We rang in the new school year with the ESPERO school for the deaf this month. The students and teachers are ready and excited for the 2023 year. To celebrate, we had a ceremony with a slideshow of the past year, games, snacks, and all the pomp and circumstance necessary to

officially open the school year. Thank you for the support given to this program and celebrating with us through its growth each year! Please pray for the new teachers we have added to our growing team and for each individual student as they commit to their education in 2023.





## A note from Donna

This year I had the privilege of spending three weeks at camp. Despite the scorpions, bugs, heat, and cold showers, I truly loved the experience. My role was to support our team as well as be the disciplinarian. I, along

with Irma Santos, our DESEO administrator, worked behind the scenes to be sure the staff needs were met as well as the kitchen staff. Occasionally we succumbed to the temptation to jump in, especially when it involved slime and water. It was very necessary at times to discipline some of the participants, but I found it ended up being a time of bonding and listening. So many of the children in our program come from very challenging situations. For example: during the second week there was a group of 10 boys, ages 12 to 14. 8 of the 10 have mothers in the age range of 25-28 years old. When you do the math, you realize they are the approximate age their mothers were when they were born. Many of the children come from broken homes, or homes where they've never known who their father is, or children who have been left behind by their parents because of immigration. When

I listened to their stories, I felt so much compassion for them. One of the most effective disciplines for the 12-14 year olds was for them to have to sit with me instead of their group for a specific activity. Everyone knew they were in trouble if they were sitting beside me. One boy, named Michael, who mainly lives on the street, had been to see me several times over the week. The last night during the last activity, he once again "earned" the privilege of sitting with me. He leaned over, put his arm around me and said, "I thought since it was the last night, I'd like to sit with you." I am still not sure if that was a clever coverup or he meant it. Regardless, I know that he knew I cared for him, and I also knew that he had a week unlike his usual that included a lot of love, food, and safety. That's what we strive for at our Bible camp: love, safety, security, nourishment through food, and a glimpse at how much Jesus loves them.

It is our dream to one day have a place of our own where we can have more weeks of camp, weekend retreats, among many other things. When I finally got home to Phil, I told him that I believe camp is one of the most effective things we do in the lives of children and teens. I felt that before, but now I feel it with an even greater passion.

## 2023 Brigade Season

Brad Russell Group .....	February 25-March 4 .....	Medical
Belton Church of Christ .....	March 11-18 .....	VBS
Country View Family Farms/ .....	March 25-April 1 .....	Construction
Clemens Food Group		
Robison Family .....	May 27-June 3 .....	Construction
Blacksburg Church .....	June 3-10 .....	Construction
Southside Church, KY .....	June 10-17 .....	Medical
Southside Church, TX .....	June 17-24 .....	Medical
Disciple Trips team .....	June 24-July 1 .....	Medical
Snellville Church of Christ .....	July 1-8 .....	Mixed
Pine Tree Church of Christ .....	July 22-29 .....	Medical

## Mission UpReach Board

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## Other Giving

*Mission UpReach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We can assist you to designate MUR in a corporations' matching gifts program, or giving through a United Way campaign, or as you prepare wills for your estate.*

## Please contact us:

*Our mailing address is as follows:*

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**Longview, TX 75604**

*Please send all checks, donations and correspondence to this address.*

**You can correspond directly with Phil and Donna at:**

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