

Blanket America Ministries, Inc.

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BLANKET APPALACHIA 2013 VOLUNTEER BASIC INFORMATION

September 24, 2013

Thank you for your interest in joining us for Blanket Appalachia. For so many it has become a focal point of their fall planning, an opportunity to reach outside themselves to touch others for Jesus. Read Matthew 25:31-46 and similar passages to feel the heartbeat of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ.

Contact person

My name is Lou Stables. I am the president and lay leader of Blanket America Ministries, Inc. My mailing address, email address, phone and fax numbers are in the letterhead.

Organization and tax status

The ministry was organized as a corporation under the laws of the State of North Carolina on March 2, 2006. In June 2006 we received our approval letter from the IRS establishing our status as an independent charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our federal ID number is 20-4493497.

We took into the corporation the Appalachian ministries begun several years earlier as part of the mission activities of FBC Matthews. Blanket Appalachia is a ministry outreach of Blanket America Ministries, Inc. and has completed ten years of ministry in Appalachia. We offer Blanket Appalachia as an outreach opportunity for youth and adults of all ages as they feel the call of Jesus Christ to share His love with others in both physical and spiritual need.

Operating budget

Our operating budget for the Blanket Appalachia Ministry has grown from \$25,000 in 2003 to nearly \$150,000 in 2013 while our ministry locations have grown from 6 to more than twice that many. For 2012 there were 14 sites including three in Kentucky, two in Tennessee, one in North Carolina and eight in Virginia. In our ten years of ministry, over 315 people have made first time professions of faith in Jesus Christ on distribution day. The smallest sites see well over 100 people on distribution day and the largest has topped out at about 1,400. After lunch provided by the host churches, time permitting, you will go out to continue the ministry to shut-ins as well as those in remote communities, nursing homes, orphanages, senior citizen centers, apartment complexes, etc. You may have run out of many of the goods you gave out during the morning, but you will always have Jesus Christ as the most important and necessary gift anyone could receive.

History and Overview

In 2003 we began working with the Powell River Baptist Association located in Jonesville, VA. We knew the Lord was calling us to a broad-based ministry of outreach and evangelism. The Lord provided 39 people and \$25,000 and we took 2,000 blankets, 908 coats, 480 Bibles and 200 Bible story books and ministered in six churches. Eleven people received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior during that first edition of Blanket Appalachia.

It seems nearly everyone who has gone on Blanket Appalachia wants to go back including the director of Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) in western NC, his staff and volunteers. This is a ministry quite unlike any in which you may have participated. You can sleep at no charge Friday and Saturday nights on the floor in a beautiful school in Lee County, VA, in one of several nearby motels at your own expense, or in facilities sometimes closer to your distribution day assignment. Every year and every site is different but always exciting as you reflect back on folks you have met and people you may have impacted with the message of God's love, the salvation available only through Jesus Christ and the changed lives those bring. Excitement is running high among us in Blanket America Ministries as things now rapidly take shape for the ministry that will take place in early November.

Facilities

In the ten previous years of Blanket Appalachia two things have been constants for us. First, we meet on Friday and Saturday evenings at Jonesville First Baptist (or FBC Jonesville). Our Friday night activities are there and all of us are due in our seats at 7 PM for organizational time and a wonderful message from God's word by Jim McCafferty, our chaplain. There you will meet the leaders for Saturday activities and be assigned to teams. Saturday night, by 5 to 5:30 we will return there for supper followed by another great worship experience and a time for sharing what you have seen God do where you were serving. To reach the church you come into Virginia from Kingsport, Tennessee via I-26 to Route 23, continue north on 23 past Weber City and Gate City and about another 17 miles to Duffield. There you will turn left on Route 58 to Jonesville, about 21 miles ahead. Upon entering Jonesville, at the first stop light, go left and Jonesville First Baptist will be about a block ahead on the left. This trip requires about five hours of actual driving time from Charlotte, NC.

The second constant is Lee High School, the crown jewel of the county. This is a low income county but this facility is first rate. This is where all youth groups and many adults can sleep on the floors at no charge. Females are in the gym and males are down one of the halls. Bring sleeping bags, air mattresses, cots or whatever you might use if camping out. Shower facilities for both men and women are on opposite sides of the gym. Restroom facilities are in the shower rooms and along the halls. To reach the school, upon leaving the church, turn right out of the parking lot, go straight ahead through Jonesville and Lee High will be on your left about 4 miles ahead, shortly after passing a stop light where a Super Wal-Mart is up the hill on the left. It's in a little wide spot in the road called Ben Hur. Parking is on the right side of the building. The school will only be opened **after** worship services both evenings. We are guests there so be certain all your people are very conscious to treat the facility splendidly because we enjoy being welcomed back year after year.

People served

Typically we serve from maybe 150 to 400 people at most distribution sites. Every year is different. Some years the weather is picture post card gorgeous. Other years there's a note of

winter in the air with possibly a few snow flurries. Last year the weather was gorgeous but many people stayed home. Poverty is so pervasive many can only afford a little bit of gasoline. What will this year bring? Only God knows! We will serve in the same locations we did last year. The folks at these locations are expecting big things because they know they serve a great God who loves all His people. Blanket Appalachia, in most locations, will be the biggest outreach event the church has and they love it. The biggest factors we have in choosing distributions sites are their burden for the lost and their love for the message given to us by Jesus Christ. In the past we have declined to go back to sites where it was discovered the church had no burden for the lost in their own communities. We try to qualify every church, but the talk and the walk do not always coincide. This is so very serious. God loves those people. He wants all people to be saved. So many are lost and their needs are so basic. But if our visit is treated as no more than social services, a give-away, we shake the dust off our feet and go elsewhere.

Detailed description of the program

The goods we purchase or that are donated to us are locally accumulated at a storage site in southwest VA until the Friday before the distribution. On that Friday morning we pre-position goods at the distribution churches using volunteers and vehicles from their own congregations. Our youth and adult volunteer missionary teams then arrive in Jonesville VA Friday evening for an organizational meeting and worship service. Bedding space is available in the gym and halls of Lee High School. (Those who prefer other accommodations are free to book rooms at their own expense in local hotels.) Early Saturday morning each team travels to their assigned distribution site which has already been physically arranged by the members of the local church for storage, display, traffic flow, kitchen/dining space and counseling space. Our teams arrive by 7:30. The sites open at 8 AM though many in need will already have been in line for quite some time. That time before the doors open at 8 is used to meet the local church folks you will be working with, see how the facilities are laid out and to have prayer for the ministry opportunities you will experience. When the doors open, the families coming to the distribution wait while a member of the family completes a half page information sheet with names, ages and contact information. As soon as a church member or ministry volunteer is available they take the sign in sheet and a single family and try to establish a basic relationship of caring and trust coupled with a response to that family's unique prayer needs. Generally, now knowing something about the family's relationship with Jesus, the volunteer (or local minister) will offer to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the family before escorting the family into the distribution area to get coats, blankets and Bibles according to their need. (Some sites handle the distribution and presentation of the gospel differently). We also usually have hundreds of beautiful cedar crosses made by a member of our team. Those who are receptive or are already Christians are offered the crosses our volunteer has been wearing. Whether members of the family are receptive to the gospel or not, each participant is treated equally as a child of God. After the distribution, the sign up sheets are counted to determine the number of families and the number of individuals served and are then turned over to the local church as a ready-made list of local families with visitation or follow up opportunities.

Only individuals actually present can receive the goods we bring. The reason is simple. We cannot pray with or share the gospel message with those not present. That is the foundational principle of the ministry. There should be very few exceptions and those are only at the discretion of the pastor or team leader. We cannot abuse this policy.

Typically the crowds coming to a distribution church slow to a trickle by late morning or early afternoon. The host churches provide lunch for all the volunteers. Then local church members

and our volunteers spend as much of the afternoon as possible going to areas where the residents could not or would not come to the distribution site. These may be shut-ins, nursing homes, low income housing projects, orphanages or communities where economics, pride or mistrust kept them away. When the day is over and the goods exhausted, the crews reassemble in Jonesville for supper, inspiring stories of the day and a worship service. Typically some have to return home Saturday evening while those remaining try to get a decent night's rest. On Sunday morning we are invited to a few of the host churches for breakfast, Sunday School and worship before heading back home. Breakfast sites are assigned Friday night. Much planning goes into this at the host churches so please do not abuse this graciously provided privilege.

Long term vision

One of the reasons for becoming independent was to remove any barriers to churches of other denominations who may want to join us. Until we became an independent ministry in 2006 we were perceived as a Baptist ministry. We believe that should not be so. While because of our roots many are Baptists, we are an evangelical Christian ministry. Our position is that this is a ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, not a social service agency. It will always be operated to bring the love of God to people whether they are needy physically, spiritually or both. Sometimes you need to feed a hungry person to gain their trust and attention. We use coats and blankets for that. These folks are needy and distressed in many ways. We go to address as many needs as possible.

What do you need?

You need a heart for the lost and hurting - economically, spiritually and emotionally. More than just a heart for the people, you need to be prepared to pray with the people you serve, to ask questions and to listen intently to determine their spiritual needs and to share with them the gospel message if they do not already have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ based on His finished work on the cross. **Prepare yourself for this.** Tracts will be available at the distribution site where you serve and are in every Bible we offer. We have to be so much more than a friendly face that is attached to hands full of coats and blankets. The Lord's commands in Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28 are very explicit. His word could not be more direct and penetrating than in Matthew 22:37-39 and Matthew 25:31-46.

The cost to you for this weekend of ministry is typically that of one meal on the road, both going and coming and your transportation. Car pooling or church buses are recommended. Some adults and families may stay in a local motel at their own expense. Most of us stay at no cost in public facilities such as a local high school. If you drive, please have room in your vehicle to help Saturday to transport team members to and from their assigned ministry site. We may not know who rode to Appalachia together so you may be assigned differently.

Other costs

If you can help with fund-raising, please make checks payable to Blanket America Ministries, Inc. and mail them to the address in the letterhead. Feel free to contact your employer, friends and family for both prayer and financial support. This is necessary because the average person coming to a distribution is treated with about \$25 in goods at our cost. That would include a coat, blanket and Bible which at typical retail prices would cost them around \$75 to \$100. Multiply that by the thousands we serve that day and you begin to get a picture of the cost of operating this ministry. We really need our volunteers and their churches to help with the cost of conducting the ministry. Offerings, fund-raiser proceeds, and gifts from employers, family and friends are much appreciated.

If you have contacts for what could be free or inexpensive goods, please get in touch with us. In some prior years we have had free shoes, boots, baby shoes, ladies' slippers and afghans. Last year we also had hundreds of wonderful hand-made stuffed dolls with a witnessing necklace around their necks. It all counts when you are working with people who need these things.

Cell phone service is improving in Appalachia but many locales still have no service or very poor service. Therefore cell phones may often be useless and cell phone batteries may be very quickly depleted.

Signing up to go

A sign up sheet is required for all participants so we will know who you are for organizational purposes and to have contact information for communications and in case of emergencies. We need them as early as possible to do our organizational work and so we can furnish information to you such as driving instructions and contact information for those remaining at home. Please print legibly rather than hurriedly. Children less than the age to be in youth groups are welcome but must be in the active, round the clock care of the parents and must be listed (with ages) on the parent's sign up sheet.

Please mail or scan and email all sign up sheets (or copies of same) to the address at the bottom of the volunteer sign up form. Regardless of how you get your sign up sheets to us, **we must have these in hand by Monday October 21st.**

Your personal dress should be in good repair, casual, tasteful and conservative. No bare midriffs, plunging necklines, sagging pants or trendy clothing. Durable and functional is much better. Expect temperatures to be 5 to 15 degrees lower than in Charlotte. Blue jeans are fine all three days. Jewelry, heavy make up or anything flashy should be avoided. We go as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ and must in all ways conduct ourselves in such a manner as to direct attention to Him rather than to ourselves. We go to help those whose personal sense of dignity has taken a beating, possibly all their lives. We cannot detract from that which remains but should only seek to build them up in the Lord. Therefore cameras should be used with the greatest discretion when away from your overnight locations and only by or with the guidance of site leaders. The people you will see are children of God, just as we are. Please do nothing to make them feel they are not equal to us, a curiosity or on display and do nothing to detract from any sense of personal dignity and self-worth they may have remaining.

Other considerations

All going on the trip should expect to have and accept the opportunity to pray with those coming to the distributions. Many will experience the eternal joy of being able to lead someone to repentance and salvation. Everyone should prepare themselves and those in their charge to be able to speak with those who come about their need for a personal saving relationship with Christ and how to have it. Don't let this opportunity slip away because you are not prepared. Church and group leaders should prepare their volunteers accordingly prior to the trip. See 1 Peter 3:15. Tracts will be available to use during witnessing opportunities and to give to those you may talk with about salvation.

Many in Appalachia may have accepted Christ – many times, even weekly. They need to know if they are ever truly saved they are a child of God, and though they may sin, need only to repent of the sin and confess it to Jesus to be brought back into a right relationship with Him. Be

familiar with passages of scripture about being safe in the hand of God, that no one can snatch them out of His hand, etc. (John 10:28-30)

For those wishing to stay in a motel at their own expense the second weekend in November there are three motels in or very near the Lee County area. None are 4 or 5 star but then their prices aren't either. They reflect the economies of the towns in which they are located. First is the Convenient Inn in Pennington Gap VA, phone 276-546-5350. Second is the Jonesville Motor Lodge in Jonesville VA, phone 276-346-3210. Third is the Travel Inn in Duffield VA, phone 276-431-4300. If you are coming the first weekend in November to Bluefield, there is a Comfort Inn very close by at 38769 Governor G C Peery Highway (Rt 460 on the southwest side of Bluefield, VA), phone 276-326-3688. There is a discount program worth 30% off their standard rates available only through ChoiceHotels.com.


As you can see, this year we are doing Blanket Appalachia on successive weekends. The reason is two sites in the Bluefield/Richlands area, in Hazard KY and in Manchester KY are so distant from our other sites none of our volunteers serving in those sites would be able to return to Jonesville in time for Saturday night activities. So we will minister in those three locations October 31 through November 2. We cover the sites in Kingsport TN, Middlesboro KY and far southwest VA the weekend of November 8-10, 2013. The first weekend is an abbreviated event in which we will arrive Friday afternoon or very early Saturday morning, work the distributions and possibly return home on Saturday afternoon. However, the folks at Crosspointe Community Fellowship where we have the distribution on Saturday morning would be happy to have any or all of us join them for worship on Sunday morning.

Final concerns

Christianity is first and foremost a relationship with Jesus Christ. But scripture also tells us not to forsake the gathering of ourselves together – fellowship among believers which builds up the body of Christ. In this age of all manner of personal electronic entertainment and communication devices, I'm sure we all have seen people in public oblivious of those around them because their attention is on what is plugged into their ears or the little screen in front of their faces. That was evident in Lee High School last year. For this reason we require that all such personal electronic devices be left at home by all students. This includes laptops, cell phones, MP3 players, I pods, I pads, notebooks, etc. Only adults who are group leaders, chaperones, etc. will be allowed to have cell phones. If there is an emergency, we are certain a responsible adult will let you use their cell phone. You should be able to get your leaders' cell phone numbers to leave with your parents. That is your responsibility. If you are so attached to your devices rather than to those you are with, consider your priorities; you may need to stay at home with your device.

If at any time you have questions, please feel free to call or email me.

Yours truly,


Lou Stables

**BLANKET APPALACHIA
VOLUNTEER SIGN UP FORM
2013**

All please read, understand, sign and forward to your church or youth leader or on to Lou Stables. See below:

This is for Blanket Appalachia, a mission trip focusing on personal contact with our neighbors in Appalachia. It is not a camp or retreat. It will be memorable and possibly life changing. Since we go being obedient to the Lord's commands, everyone is expected to share their faith through word and deed (Matthew 5:16). We go relying on the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us that others will be drawn to Jesus because they see that same Jesus alive in us. We will be divided into teams for service so you should not count on being assigned to a crew with your best friend.

**** AFFIRMATION ****

I sign below indicating I understand the above and will endeavor to present myself exemplary, a child of God cherished by Him and called by Him into service. I will be ready to share the gospel message with those I meet and work with.

Signed _____ Date _____

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY - PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY - PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

Circle the weekend(s) you want to attend

November 1-3 and/or November 9-10, 2013

First name _____
 Last name _____
 Mailing address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Home phone _____
 Work phone _____
 Cell phone _____
 Email address _____
 Emergency contact and phone number _____

Please circle the appropriate answers below

I am a	Male	Female	
I am an adult	Yes	No	
I am an adult and a youth leader	Yes	No	
I am a parent bringing younger children with me (Parents of young children are responsible for them 24/7) (Please furnish names and ages)	Yes	No	
(Youth leaders are responsible for all older children)			
I am a student in my church's youth ministry	Yes	No	
I am a college student	Yes	No	
I am a member of what church and/or location			_____
Will you be driving to Appalachia?	Yes	No	
If so, can you help transport team members to sites?	Yes	No	If so, how many _____
Will you be sleeping in a motel at your own expense? (If so, you must make your own reservations)	Yes	No	
If with us last year, where did you serve?			_____
Do you have any special needs? If yes, please give details	Yes	No	_____
Any particular passions or gifts?			_____
Will you stay for breakfast Sunday in one of the churches?	Yes	No	

For questions contact Lou Stables at 704-542-5533 or email at lou@lstablescpa.com.

When complete and signed, please return to your youth leader or directly to

Blanket America Ministries, Inc. P. O. Box 472008 Charlotte, NC 28247-2008

All completed forms are due in this office not later than Monday, October 21, 2013.

We look forward to having you be a part of this wonderful ministry. God is alive and well and oh, so busy!
 See most of you November 8 at 7 PM at Jonesville FBC. Come to partner with Him in His miracles of grace & love.