



PHOTOS: MICHELLE SCHWARTZMAN, VIM COORDINATOR

*Due to the global COVID pandemic, Susquehanna Conference Volunteers in Mission held a virtual mission trip to McCurdy Ministries Community Center in New Mexico this year. Page 7: photos from prior in-person trips to McCurdy Ministries in New Mexico.*

## VIM Journeys to McCurdy Ministries Community Center

By Linda Gilgore, York, PA

It has been 14 years since my first of many trips to McCurdy Ministries Community Center in the beautiful Española Valley of Northern New Mexico. At the time, I was a senior high youth leader at a United Methodist church in York, PA.

That first trip turned out to be much more than I expected. It took very little time for me to decide that McCurdy would always be in my heart and that the staff at McCurdy were the best examples I had ever seen of walking in faith, being Christ-like humble servants, and truly being a light in a community. It was both heartbreaking and refreshing. Their struggle was real and their commitment to making their corner of the world a better place was inspiring.

Each summer we return to McCurdy for a one-week trip. We love the relationships we have built with the staff at McCurdy, we love the variety of projects that we work on, we love the gratitude shown us for literally the smallest of tasks completed, and we love the traditions and history of Northern New Mexico. Each night at devotions we would hear from the team members about their experience. We love to have youth on our trips because it is a rare opportunity to see how other youth live and how they can survive and even thrive with very little “stuff”. I would venture to say that most nights on most trips there are tears of being overwhelm at the magnitude of the struggles in the area and tears of joy being the hands and feet of Jesus for a moment in time.

Every year the dynamics of the team going to McCurdy are different, but the mission of each team is the same. The variety of the projects needing completion is different,

but the purpose of each project is the same. Having the opportunity to lend a hand to the important ministries of McCurdy to their community has been and continues to be incredibly challenging, as well as incredibly rewarding and often life-changing. When realizing that cleaning, stripping, cleaning, and waxing floors in a building will make an impact on the school year for the kids, it makes the task so much more relevant and enjoyable.

Not being able to go to McCurdy in 2020 for our annual trip was disappointing for us but even more disappointing for McCurdy, who were left with a lot of projects to complete during a pandemic without the much-needed help that comes from VIM teams. As a result, we decided to lead a Zoom virtual mission trip to McCurdy. By participating in a virtual mission trip, we were able to promote VIM trips in general and McCurdy specifically. We have been able to share our love for McCurdy and the importance of connecting as a team for a common purpose and to connect with some of the beloved McCurdy staff.

Each year at the end of our week at McCurdy it is bittersweet. We have laughed and cried, worked hard, and enjoyed the beauty and majesty of Northern New Mexico with some side trips. And we are always reminded that there are “McCurdy’s” in every community. Even though we will keep returning to McCurdy, we can also find ways in our own communities to be the hands and feet of Jesus. The same underlying issues are in lots of communities such as, poverty, mental illness, addiction, etc.

Over 100 years ago, one person made one decision that changed the trajectory of Española, New Mexico. You, too, can choose to be the light in your valley.