

**Mar. 1-3**  
Children's Ministry/VBS  
Training at CCC

**Mar. 2**  
Pathfinder Bible  
Experience at CCC

**Mar. 2**  
Marriage Seminar at  
Mountain View Church

**Mar. 8-9**  
Latter Rain Power  
Prayer Conference in  
Ceres

**Mar. 8-10**  
African American Teen  
Retreat at Camp Wawona

**Mar. 16**  
Marriage Seminar at  
Modesto

**Mar. 22-31**  
Youth Mission Trip to  
Puerto Rico

**Mar. 23**  
Health Seminar in Fresno

**Mar. 31**  
Clerk & Treasurer's  
Training at CCC

**Apr. 12-14**  
Girls' & Guys' Retreat  
Girls at Soquel  
Guys at Camp Wawona



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# Central Acts

Newsletter for  
Central California  
Conference of  
Seventh-day Adventists

## Agents for the Holy Spirit

By Caron Oswald

**H**ugh Seagraeves is always looking for a few good men and women. As a district manager for Farmers Insurance, he administers 5,000 agencies in three California counties – Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and Monterey. His responsibilities include recruiting and training people that want to have their own business.

An ad in the Santa Cruz newspaper caught Stephen Hicks' attention. "I was looking for a career change," Hicks says. "I was deeply in debt."

Hicks interviewed and decided this opportunity would be a good match. "I love talking to people and helping them find what they needed. I thought it would be fun," agreed Seagraeves.

What Hicks' never expected was to fall in love with God.

### Hugh Seagraeves

Seagraeves lives his life praising God. "All I want is to be an agent of the Holy Spirit, to introduce someone to their forever friend, Jesus," Seagraeves says.

He grew up in San Jose. When his father died, he was 8-years-old and the family plunged into poverty. Mom had to work three jobs to support the family. "We kids had to keep the house clean and work for money to help." Carol was 12, Hugh was 8 and John was 4.

Carol baby sat and painted house numbers, Hugh had an egg and paper route, did yard work and both cleaned the house and took care of John.

A couple from the Los Gatos church began visiting weekly distributing the *Signs of the*



Hugh Seagraeves (l) and Stephen Hicks

*Times* magazine "We would hear them arguing as they came down the street, but when the door opened, they were smiling," Seagraeves explains.

When they discovered this family had essential needs, a box of food was added to the weekly delivery.

Birthday gifts and invitations to church events followed.

"The whole family was baptized! The Holy Spirit saved us through this couple," Seagraeves says. Their pastor wanted the boys in church school (Carol was graduating from high school.) The church raised the money for Hugh's eight-grade year and his freshman year at Monterey Bay Academy. Seagraeves worked his way through graduation. "My sister and her family are in the church today because of these loving people."

### Stephen Hicks

A college senior, Hicks and his roommate were still at home on September 11, 2001, when the first plane struck a tower of the World Trade Center. Their apartment was on the 30th floor in a building just 500 feet from the Twin Towers. From front row seats, they watched the second plane crash into the other tower.

When the first tower collapsed, they panicked. "Our building was shaking like it was in an earthquake, so we tried to get out as fast as we could. But at the 15th floor, we were told to go back."

Five minutes after the second tower collapsed, the residents were told to

Cont. on page 2

evacuate. Hicks joined several thousand terrified people slowly making their way to the ground floor. Once outside, a lady he met from the 4th floor shared her towel to cover their faces.

“In that moment, no one is an atheist,” Hicks says.

Hicks was raised Catholic, but nominally. “I always had a longing for God. He was definitely real, was definitely watching and angry.”

To handle the aftermath of the horrific September 11th, he left New York, the city he loved and moved to California in December 2002. “I was dating a woman who lived in Santa Cruz,” he explains.

## Meeting God

Working closely together, Seagraeves noticed something. “I became aware of his pain and talked to Steve about it.” Hicks shared surviving the 9/11 attacks and how the emotional trauma continued to haunt him.

“Would you like to have peace in your life?” Seagraeves asked.

They began Bible studies. Quickly, miraculous changes were happened. “I really loved God and was already giving Bible studies to my friends.”

After Hicks attended a ShareHim evangelistic seminar presented by several Santa Cruz church members, and an Amazing Facts seminar, he made his decision and was baptized in February 2007.

Seagraeves says, “It is so awesome to me, I am so thankful to my Lord to be a part of this salvation process. Then I get to give support and courage in that walk.”

## From Girlfriend to Wife

Marina Snegove and Hicks met online in 1998 and began a friendship, followed by a year and a half of phone calls. They first met in person in 1999 and began dating two years later. That she lived in California and he lived in New York wasn't a problem.

She never wanted to marry a



Marina, Stephen and  
Chloe Hicks

Christian. Born in Russia, she had no religious training and her prejudice began by what she watched in the Christians around her. She loved Stephen Hicks who was not a religious man. But his new career was causing shocking changes.

To be supportive, together they listened to recordings from the evangelistic series. “Watching the experiences in his life, I now believed in God,” Snegove says. And she began seeking God for herself.

## 2007 and Beyond

“When God is going to take control of your life, He meets you but doesn't leave you there,” Hicks says. After his baptism, Hicks knew it was time to take stock of his life.

“If I was going to believe in Jesus, I needed to know what to do, how to move forward.” He had his agency but wasn't happy. “I felt God wanted something else for my life.”

God's plan began to take form. Hicks clearly heard from God and understood the next four decisions to make: Move, take a vacation, propose to Marina, and get a job.

He talked to Seagraeves who suggested staying with Farmers as a claims adjustor. He met with Joe Reynolds, his pastor. After talking to Reynolds about all that was happening, including the four priorities God had given him, Hicks asked, “What do I do?” “Do you feel convicted about what you are thinking?” Reynolds asked. “Then do it!”

“God just kinda did the things we needed,” Hicks says. An apartment in San Jose with the discounted rate given by mistake. A travel agent took care of planning the perfect vacation. Marina said yes when he proposed. A job offer came within 24 hours of proposing marriage. They were married 11 months later in 2008. And she was baptized!

In 2010, Hicks registered for AFCOE's four-month training course.

(AFCOE is Amazing Facts Center of Evangelism.) When the elective Media class was cancelled, he took the Lay Pastor class.

A week after his August graduation, Hicks got a call for a friend from the Korean Silicon Valley church asking if he would help pastor the English-speaking members and give the youth Bible studies. “I didn't know I would enjoy pastoring so much.”

And baby daughter Chloe joined the family.

## The Next New Beginning

Labor Day weekend in 2011, Hicks suddenly went partially blind in both eyes. The emergency room doctor ordered a spinal tap and an MRI on his brain, which revealed seven lesions. “The ER doctor told us his opinion, that is was the onset of MS (Multiple Sclerosis), that it could not be cured, and would be part of my life every day until I died.”

Marina, a mental health professional and that works in crisis intervention, was calm – on the outside. “She was raised in a different culture and does not show her emotions,” Hicks explains. “I freaked out!” With Marina's faith in God and her inner strength, she was very supportive.

Three weeks later, a neurologist confirmed the diagnosis and began an aggressive medication regime that included daily injections. A DVD and other resources provided much needed education and a MS support group was suggested and proved very helpful. By December, Hicks was ready to take stock of his life—again.

Today, he is a part-time Bible worker for the Campbell church two days a week, and cares for Chloe the other five days. “She is turning two and she can already read full sentences out loud to me!” says an extremely proud and grateful dad.

“God has shown up too many times for me to be concerned. God has Marina and me in His hands, both of us live by faith and we are looking forward to what God will do next,” Hicks says.

# Ten Days of Prayer at Fresno Adventist Academy

In response to the General Conference's 10 days of prayer initiative, Fresno Adventist Academy wanted to come together and pray. This was the first time the academy has participated in an organized prayer initiative for all the constituents of the school.

"To be honest, I didn't know what to expect," says Principal Eric Johnson. "Would people come out to something like this? The answer was a resounding YES!"

From 6:30-7:15 p.m. on January 8-18, 2013, church members, pastors, conference staff, FAA students, parents, and staff met in the choir room to pray. Clovis Pastor Don MacLafferty facilitated the prayer times.

The daily attendance average was between 90 and more than 110. Divided into small groups led by local pastors and church members, had one purpose to pray for a personal revival in each of our lives.

The prayer focus was prayers for personal revival, ways to share Christ in the community and freedom from the school's bondage of debt.

"I was pleasantly surprised by the turn out and support for the school, it was far better than I expected," said Carlyn Murdock an alumna from the class of '79. "It was very moving to see the heartfelt dedication to a cause that is so deeply meaningful to a lot of us," she said.

Many persons who attended expressed how blessed they were by the experience.

"God has called me, as a busy leader, to refocus and rededicate myself to being in the Word of God each day," Johnson adds.

God also moved on individuals to give sacrificially to this school. Individuals and families have pledged many different things from paintings to businesses and lay the proceeds before God to help rid this school from the bondage of debt it has been under.

"My prayer is that the end of these 10 days of prayer will be just the


beginning of what God is going to do on this campus for His honor and glory," Johnson says.



depths of our discouragement, God stands ready to step in and completely change our circumstances. God looks at the challenges we face—in our hearts, in our homes and in the

halls of FAA. He sees the places that are spiritually dead and in desperate need of revival.

"His response? 'Now will I arise. Now will I be exalted; now will I be lifted up.' In our seemingly insurmountable obstacles, God sees opportunities.

"This month, my prayer is for God to step in on this campus in a big way. For His presence to bring a fire to our hearts that has never been there before. For His Holy Spirit's transforming power to break down all of the walls we have set-up and capture our hearts again. If this is your prayer as well, please join me in claiming this promise...and watching for His answers in His perfect timing." 

## When Brave Men Cry

*A devotional by Julie MacLafferty, 11th grade, Fresno Adventist Academy*

*"Gone were the days of walking through the Red Sea. Gone were the days when nations trembled at the mention of the Israelites. The nation of Israel had rejected God and turned away from Him, and now they were left empty and searching. Isaiah 33:7-9 describes the scene: 'Look, their brave men cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly. The highways are deserted; no travelers are on the roads. The treaty is broken, its witnesses are despised, no one is respected. The land dries up and wastes away.'*

*"I read these verses and feel just a small taste of the hopelessness the Israelites must have felt. Continuing on, my eyes freeze and focus on the next few verses. They seem out of place. 'Now will I arise, says the LORD. Now will I be exalted; now will I be lifted up.' (Isaiah 33:10)*

*"At first glance, God's statement seems like an oxymoron, a total contrast to the description just before. What is He talking about? After a minute his declaration makes perfect sense.*

*"In our darkest moments, in the*

## SOQUEL VOLUNTEER PROJECT

(MAY 19-22, 2013)

Calling All  
Volunteers!!!

Have a group?  
Bring them!  
Come one, come all!

Projects:

- Cabins: Repairs/Refurbish Interiors, Paint Fascia & Doors
- Refurbish Interior of North Park Cookhouse
- Miscellaneous Repairs & Upkeep

Skills Needed: Carpentry, Electrical, Painting, & Helping Hands



Register: Caron Oswald, 559-347-3181,  
[coswald@cccsda.org](mailto:coswald@cccsda.org), or to register online:  
[cccvolunteerministries.adventistfaith.org](http://cccvolunteerministries.adventistfaith.org)

# Sunnyvale Goes to India

Connie Umbenhower, member of the Sunnyvale Adventist church, grew up in the City of Shillong, in the state of Meghalaya, India. Knowing about the never-ending needs of adults and children, she started a ministry to make a difference – Visions for Villages.

Two years ago Umbenhower emailed Sandi Colon, Bible worker at Sunnyvale, asking if it would be possible to plan a mission trip to her home town. Colon and her pastor husband Rob has recently organized and led a mission trip to Africa for some of their church members. The Colons said yes.

Umbenhower immediately got in touch with her contacts in the City of Shillong, the Khasi Jaintia Conference and a friend who works in the state agriculture department. The village of Mawpun was selected, Colon set the scope of projects and 15 volunteers agreed to go. The Khasi Jaintia Conference provided more than 20 volunteers to help.



Jenny Jin attending to patients



Connie Umbenhower interviews with a local TV station while Pastor Rob Colon waits his turn



Thao Ngo painting the cottage

## Trip Highlights


- Local news came out to interview us and aired a 30 min. special throughout the region.
- A villager wrote a letter of thanks that was printed in the regional newspaper.
- A loud speaker shared the meetings throughout the village with positive responses.
- Village elders were skeptical about a volunteer team but free reading glasses turned concerns to smiles. The agricultural department gave seminars and will be planting trees on the church land to train villagers how to grow a new product that will provide more income.
- The new income will supplement food needs and assist the pastor and his ministry.
- Rain pushed those standing outside the meeting tent on the night Pastor Rob was giving his testimony on overcoming addictions. It was the only time it rained during our ministry there.
- One woman hiked ten miles to thank the volunteers. Her son was battling an alcohol addiction, came to church on Sabbath, heard Pastor Rob's testimony, and made a decision to change his life.

## The volunteers were busy! The projects:

- Treated more than 600 patients – 100 patients per day
- Gave away nearly 200 pairs of reading and prescription glasses
- Taught 12 health seminars including overcoming addictions, healthy diet, clean water, and dental hygiene
- Provided free toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Taught VBS for more than 250 children
- Invited young men to play soccer in the evenings
- Went door-to-door with free shoes for the children, small gifts for the parents and gave away balloon animals to the kids on the streets
- Gave a warm blanket and Bible to every home in the village
- Cleared church land, painted the new pastor's home and fenced in church property

Team member Joe Luna was deeply moved by the experience. All his life he had wanted to go on a mission trip, but thought it was for those specially trained. Now he knows that all you need is to be willing.

Dedicating the pastor's new home brought tears to everyone's eyes. "He also told us that he used to travel to the village and go visit the people to build connections with them," Sandi reports. He said, "Now that you have come, the people come to me."

"To give love without expecting anything in return, without even expecting people to join our church, to love for love's sake is the greatest ground breaking and seed planting work we can do," Sandi says. "In India, we tilled the soul, planted the seeds, watered with love, and left the garden of Mawpun village in the hands a loving pastor living in a new home. We trust that God will give the increase, perhaps 100 where there might have only been one." 



Villager overjoyed with his new blanket and Bible



Erik Marshall and Joe Luna rebuilding a church fence



Grigore, Andy Lee and Sara Tank leading VBS