

AIM HISTORY

AIM involves adult volunteers from across the country joining together in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee for various amounts of time throughout the year. AIM service includes major home repair, teaching visual performing arts to children with special needs (Kaleidoscope), running workshops for teenagers to experience "fun learning" in a Christian environment (Summer Plus), and teaching character building through outdoor adventure (Quest).

AIM evolved from the needs found in the Youth Ministry Service Project and Youth Ministry Day Camp programs. Through Service Project, Mountain T.O.P. discovered people wanted and needed major home repairs that required adult maturity and skill. The Day Camp program found children graduating from the program and still wanting to be a part of the summer Mountain T.O.P. experience. Therefore, God nudged us to explore ministering with and to teenagers of the Cumberland Mountains.

In 1995, Mountain T.O.P. birthed a new emphasis through the AIM program called Kaleidoscope. Kaleidoscope is a visual and performing arts camp for under-served, special needs children in Grundy County. Along with a rich history of local art, Kaleidoscope partners with artists and art teachers to provide unique experiences for children who otherwise miss this emphasis in their learning.

Due to the large amount of need in the Cumberland Mountains for major home repair, we have found another window of opportunity to continue our service. This window is in the fall months, offering long weekends for adults to come do Major Home Repair projects in an effort to continue improving the living conditions for families before winter comes.

As part of the continuing growth and outreach, AIM joined with USDA Rural Housing Development in 1998 to help families on the mountain with the costs of improving their living conditions. It is a special and mutually beneficial relationship for all involved. Through low-interests loans and grants, Mountain T.O.P. can multiply dollars to provide more resources to put into creating safe, sanitary, and economical living conditions.

The summer of 2009 will mark the 20th summer of ministry for AIM on the mountain. Over these 20 years, volunteers with AIM have helped countless families improve their living conditions by building them a house or rehabilitating their existing dwelling. Teenagers and special needs children in 6 different counties have been touched by the unconditional love of volunteers who have come just to spend a week with them.

AIM began a new ministry in the summer of 2010, adding Quest to its summer programs for Grundy County youth in an attempt to encourage them to make better life choices. Quest targets troubled youth, recruiting through guidance counselors, youth directors, court liaisons, and other social service agencies. The goal of Quest is to teach character building through outdoor adventure. Though these safe but stressful situations, teens realize their capacity to make good decisions and form lasting relationships.