



Appalachia Mission: Henderson Settlement Sheila Waterhouse

The Henderson Settlement is a big, meandering facility with a variety of programs and services that provide essential needs to the local southern Kentucky community. Almost 100 years ago, Hiram Frakes (the town namesake) found himself witness to a murder trial in a notorious section of the county, where the judge was so fed up with the violence and lack of respect for the law, that the system gave up on the community.

Frakes, a pastor, took a different tactic. With no school for 30 miles, and no land or money of his own, Frakes shared his dream for a local school with everyone he could. The proud community listened. Donations of land came in, and financial support followed. A teacher volunteered her services, and her first cabin is still on the grounds today.

Today, the effect of the Henderson Settlement can be felt in all corners of the region. Henderson has become a staple and integral provider of enriching and life saving support in an impoverished, proud community.

The settlement has features like a community garden, where they not only grow vegetable starts for people to grow their own vegetables, but they grow vegetables to give out and they teach people how to grow a vegetable garden.

A thrift shop with donations from all over, in the past from FUMC on our mission trips, offers clothing and household items for a small cost.

The work camp is the feature at Henderson that FUMC was most involved with. An annual family-friendly mission trip saw 10-50 members of our FUMC community traveling to Frakes to work on household projects for people in the region. Each year brought different projects, all based on the skills and ages of our group. We did project like:

- Installed ramps so a wheelchair bound resident could leave her house unassisted
- Dug drainage ditches to prevent houses from flooding in the spring rains
- Replaced leaky roofs for families with young children
- Built goat fences for the settlement farm, and mucked goat stalls
- Planted seedlings for the greenhouse projects
- Sorted clothing in the thrift store

Our mission there has been an important part of families and youth over the years.

Chris Nelson shares, "Our two trips to Henderson are significant to our family. It was great to have the chance to work shoulder to shoulder, not only with your own family, but also with others within our church. The whole experience made us feel like we were pushing a little bit more good into the world and that's pretty cool!"

RuthAnn Church comments, "I'm pretty sure the people who have benefited the most from Henderson mission trips are our FUMC members, my own kids, my husband and myself. For one thing, each of

our three children have had their first introduction to construction work and using power tools there. I love the photo of Naomi in the line-up of about 8 kids holding shovels, and she is the only girl. My husband relishes the opportunity to spend two days living out his dream of being a construction worker. We've had more than one set of friends join us for the journey to Kentucky -- friends who would probably otherwise have no interaction with our church. I still remember the 13-year-old boy of one of these families sitting on the deck of the community center at Henderson, talking to another tween on the trip and saying, "I love this so much, I'm going to move down here!" I appreciate that sentiment, because there are so many times during each trip that I feel that same love of place and people."

Mission and service are an important part of the youth programs at FUMC, and the Henderson mission trip was a good way to experience that. Wendy Everett adds, "I got to know a lot of the kids who would eventually join youth group by participating in the Henderson trip. I went three years, and on my first trip I went with my god-daughter, then my niece came the following year, and the year after that my niece, her friend, and my sister-in-law came! I enjoyed building kitchen cabinets for a family, transplanting tiny seedlings in the greenhouse, and finally--digging post holes down in the valley for a new pen for calves. It was quite a hike back up to the top for lunch and dinner!"

The Henderson Settlement is more than the work camp. It also provides:

- Youth ministries
- Grow camp - learn to farm
- Greenhouse
- Craft shop
- Food pantry
- Library
- Infant Support
- Senior Support
- Thrift Store
- Women's Support
- Christmas at Henderson

Our church has been traveling to Frakes for over 20 years and hopes to resume the program in the future. This is a foundational mission program, one that provides community, service and education for our group, and one that works seamlessly with our friends in Kentucky.

Now more than ever, the community needs support to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters. Please keep Henderson Settlement in your prayers and consider how you can get involved as more opportunities arise.