



## Forward in Faith

by DEB DEARMOND

# Campers on Mission

Pack your gear and take the Great Commission to the great outdoors.

*“ON THE ROAD AGAIN” could be the theme song for a growing number of volunteers who share a love for Jesus — and camping! I recently learned about a fascinating organization that grew from these common bonds.*

JERRY AND RENEE MCGOVERN shared their journey in a recent interview. In 1988, the McGoverns felt God’s calling them to serve in some type of ministry. “We knew it would be in building or construction, which was Jerry’s career.” Renee learned about Campers on Mission from a friend. The McGoverns poured over the information they received about the organization’s goals and vision.

Campers on Mission (COM) is a national fellowship of evangelical Christian campers who seek opportunities to share their faith and love of Jesus Christ through participation in mission activities while camping. Two characteristics of COM volunteers are a love of the great outdoors and a love of sharing Jesus.

These Christian campers are active members of local churches who have taken the Great Commission seriously. While enjoying the camping experience, they participate in mission projects that allow them to engage in opportunities to tell others about Christ. These projects

include church planting, construction, disaster relief recovery, Backyard Bible Clubs, fairs and festivals, campgrounds, auto racing, parades, and truck stops.

## Campers on Mission have a creed to “Share Christ As We Go.”

The McGoverns immediately knew this was what God had called them to do. But they mistakenly believed that members had to be retired, and so, according to Renee, they waited anxiously for 23 years to join.

“The brochure explained that each member was a self-supporting volunteer,” said Jerry. “We translated that as retired. Wrong.”

In fact, many members are still working and take their vacations to serve across the nation to meet a variety of needs.

Church planting is an area in which the McGoverns and their fellow members serve often. “There’s much to be done for a new work,” says Jerry. COM members often stay on even when the building is complete to support the church in the early days. A few of the activities include bookkeeping, volunteering in the nursery, helping with Vacation Bible School, and leading Bible study groups when volunteers are in short supply. Some volunteers help with landscaping and

even website designing. Youth camps, evangelism, disaster relief, and special ministries like music and counseling are among the ways COM members have served the local church.

“As your season of life changes, new opportunities open up,” Jerry told me. “You might like to travel a little more once the children leave home. Some members find winter projects in warmer states like Texas and Florida.”

Renee spoke about the organization’s “everyone’s welcome” approach. “Health also determines how much we volunteer and how long we can work each day. Since there’s no set number of hours required or expected, you may work at your own pace according to your health needs. We accept volunteers just as they are.” That includes grandparents raising their grandchildren. “We love to see families serving together. It teaches children at an early age of the value in serving others.”

Jerry and Renee officially joined COM in 2011, and their love of the organization transitioned them to leadership roles as they now serve as national coordinators. When asked if that has limited their personal opportunity to serve the projects they love, Renee responded: “A little. But we love encouraging our members. We still go to chapter websites, searching for projects available in each state. The Lord always lets us know which direction to take.”

Campers on Mission have a creed to “Share Christ As We Go.” And they do go. Here are some amazing one-year accomplishments from June 2015 to June 2016

- Total Hours Donated: 222,329;
- Total Miles Driven : 616,527;
- Professions of Faith: 455;
- Testimonies Shared: 8000.

### WHAT’S REQUIRED? AND WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

• **Skills and Experience Required:** None — just a willing heart and spirit! There is always a job for everyone. Sometimes, you can assist someone who has a skill, and you learn new things on the job.

• **Time Commitment:** Members choose where they serve, when they go, and which projects they work on — from Alaska to Florida and everywhere in between.

• **Community:** National and state rallies create lifelong friendships with like-minded believers. Couples often plan to serve together on projects.

• **More information:** Contact the national coordinator at 479-253-5879, 479-363-7035, nationalcoordinator@campersonmission.net, or locate chapter presidents on campersonmission.net.

DEB DEARMOND is an expert in the fields of communication, relationship, and conflict resolution. Her newest book is *Don’t Go To Bed Angry. Stay Up and Fight!*