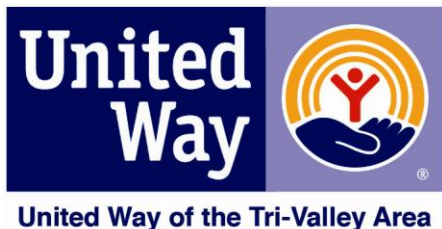


Partner Profiles



Lisa Park Laflin, Executive Director

Editor's Note: This article is part of an ongoing series that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA), its funded Partners, collaborators, and recipients of donor-designated funds. To learn more about how you can give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, or to view the article archive, visit www.uwtva.org. To contact staff, call (207) 778-5048 or e-mail info@uwtva.org.

The United Methodist Economic Ministry (UMEM) in Salem has been assisting the people of northern Franklin County for more than 40 years. What started as a food pantry, has grown into a major force of change. UMEM's goals are to:

- 1.) provide safe, warm and dry housing for area families and individuals who struggle to have their basic needs met;
- 2.) provide supplemental food and fresh produce when available;
- 3.) outreach into the community with individuals and families in crisis as well as provide a safe atmosphere for folks who need to have someone listen to their concerns;
- 4.) provide free dental care for children, elderly and low income individuals so that travel and cost is not a barrier to good oral health;
- 5.) outfit children with new sneakers and underwear, backpacks and school supplies each year to start off school on the right foot;
- 6.) prepare and distribute holiday food baskets to help grocery budgets stretch as far as possible; and
- 7.) assist and mentor individuals and families in their journey to being self sufficient and in solving their own problems without needing to depend on others from crisis to crisis.

As you can see, UMEM is extraordinarily busy and a tremendous asset to the northern communities. UMEM does even more, however, particularly at this time of year. The small staff and cadre of volunteers are gearing up for the visit of summer mission teams. A vast network of supporting churches visit Salem and surrounding communities each summer to paint houses, build handicap ramps, repair porches, and generally improve the living situations of those most in need.

Approximately 10 teams will visit northern Franklin County this summer, varying in size from 10 – 20 members. The teams will be arriving from as far away as Indiana, and represent states all along the east coast including Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island. Depending on the various skills of the volunteers, the projects, and the weather, teams will complete 15-20 projects while they are here. Maine churches also participate, although usually on special weekend projects.

Applications for projects are still being taken. Please contact the United Methodist Economic Ministry at 678-2611 for more information. Also, please visit uwtva.org for volunteer projects in which you too can participate!