

Orphan Grain Train †

Relief for Human Need Worldwide

OGT Spotlight *Maryland Branch*

YEAR ESTABLISHED:

2004

BRANCH MANAGER AND BACKGROUND:

Bruce Coonradt

I am a retired Army Aviation Officer who served as a pilot with an additional specialty in aviation logistics. I have been an OGT volunteer for over five years. I started my OGT career helping to organize donation pickups. In addition, I enjoyed working in the warehouse, helping load international and national shipments, I also serve at the Choices Pregnancy Center on the Eastern Shore as a current Board member and help support their on-going activities.



LOCATION AND HOURS OF OPERATION:

621 East West Blvd., Millersville, Md. 21108.

Every Tuesday from 9 am to 12 noon and from 5 pm to 7 pm; and every second Tuesday of the month.

These are the official hours but there are many more hours spent at the warehouse off-loading, packaging, sorting, staging and loading shipments. Many of our fundraising activities take place at the warehouse as well as staff and organizational meetings. It seems there are always activities taking place at the facility!

WHAT INTRIGUED YOU TO VOLUNTEER AT OGT:

The mission. Enabling people who have more than they need to share their resources with those in need seemed to me to be squarely in God's wheel house. Moreover, as I got to participate in the various activities at our warehouse, it was evident that I was surrounded by good people who were happy to serve.

Joe Harvey, a faithful worker at OGT Maryland, introduced me to OGT and its humanitarian mission to serve the needy around the world. His enthusiasm along with the dedicated staff of Christian men and women, convinced me that God was doing a great work through them and the activities at the warehouse. Seeing men and women give up their time, talents, and treasures for the less fortunate around the world, seemed to me a true example of the words of Matt. 25:34-40

³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.³⁷ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?³⁸ When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?³⁹ Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

WHAT MISSION TOUCHED YOUR HEART THE MOST:

This is a hard question because there are so many missions that fill my heart with joy.

But some of the most significant to me were:

First South Sudan. This country, at 11 years old, is the newest country on the planet. Since it broke away from Sudan, it has been ravaged by tribal warfare, drought, flooding, and extreme poverty. Several of the Lost Boys of Sudan, who emigrated to the United States, live in the Annapolis area. We had the privilege to ship a container to one of the Lost Boys' former village, Panpandiar. When Pastor Stephen from Bor visited our warehouse, he was like a kid in a candy store—he needed everything.

Others include furnishing an orphanage in Cameron, with beds, dressers, desks/chairs, and other items; sending food and clothing to a leper colony and prisoners of South Sudan; providing school supplies to 14 schools in Liberia; and sending sewing machines and materials to vocational training centers for young African girls to help them earn a living for them and their families.

FUN FUNRAISERS:

Food Truck Fridays Every Friday evening, weather permitting, from April to the end of September, 8 to 10 food trucks line up on a farm next to our warehouse. They include Steakhouse BBQ, Cup O'Dough, Wanna Pizza This, Jimmy's Seafood, and Always Ice Cream. In addition to an activity for children like face painting, there is a fresh produce stand, and always an OGT truck for donations and information. It is a bit of Americana that could be a Norman Rockwell painting



An upcoming fund raiser I am looking forward to is our version of Antiques Road Show. We have engaged an appraiser who will come and appraise items brought to the warehouse by members of our local community and volunteers.

CHALLENGES:

My most challenging issue has been the transition from a volunteer to being the Branch Manager. The job continues to have many challenges but because of the help from the Assistant Branch Manager Ron Phipps and prior Branch Manager

Elfie my task was made much easier. Note, I continue to depend on them and their outstanding support.

REWARDS:

I like to tell those I meet that I am on my third career. My first career in the military as a pilot was fun, my second career as a software configuration Manager was financially rewarding, and I find this new career as the Maryland Branch Manager the most personally rewarding. I feel that I/we are doing what Christ called us to do in being servants who sacrifice our time and talents for the less fortunate in this world.

ADVICE FOR OTHER BRANCHES:

My advice to Branch Managers is to not forget to thank their volunteers for their sacrifice of their time, talents and dedication. This year we had a volunteer picnic to show our appreciation for all our volunteers and their hard work. If they were paid employees, I certainly would have passed out bonus checks for the outstanding work done during this past year, because, despite the pandemic and numerous challenges, we exceeded our goal of one shipment a month. The Lord supplied all our needs each month as we faithfully looked to him for our provision.

FAVORITE SHIPMENTS OR DELIVERIES:

My favorite shipment this year was made to Liberia. A generous congregation in Alexandria, Virginia, Messiah Lutheran Church, was closing. OGT Maryland was given the opportunity to take items for shipment to churches in that country. These items included an altar, a podium, kitchen cabinets, tables/chairs, and many other items. Also, the church's beautiful stained-glass windows and pews were removed and sent to a Lutheran Church. I felt like we were being part of a church planting. What a blessing!

SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR BRANCH:

Our 6,300 square foot warehouse is the hub of our activities and I am proud of the efforts made by those who came before me to acquire, build, and organize this dynamic facility. Norman Giguere is our warehouse manager. His management of the facility allows us to seamlessly manage the flow of items into and out of the facility. It is no small task to off load, store and load 13 shipments in a year and without his management skills and dedication it would not be possible.

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS:

15 Acting Staff and 75 Volunteers

PAST VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION:

Every month WMAR-TV, in conjunction with Chick-Fil-A, honors one senior adult who goes above and beyond to make a difference in the community. The winner of the November, 2021 Chick-fil-a Everyday Hero Award was Elfie Eberle, our founder and longtime manager of the Maryland Branch. She is currently our Solicitation Manager. Elfie has been the driving force behind our organization since its inception and continues to be an inspiration to everyone affiliated with the Orphan Grain Train. Everyone who knows Elfie knows how deserving she is of this award. Not only does she make a difference



in her local community, but she is committed to making a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters around the world. Congratulations, Elfie!

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHERS:

The last couple of years, living with Covid 19 and all its variants, have presented a number of significant challenges for myself and the Maryland OGT staff. Despite all of the challenges, our team of dedicated volunteers was able to double the number of shipments made this year. I do not take credit for this but point to the One who we are all working for, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As we all wait for His return let us remember as we give food that He said, “I am the bread of life;” as we give water He said, “I am the Living Water;” as we give clothing He said, “He would clothe us like the flower of the field” and finally as we send light, let us remember that He said “I am the Light of the World”. The most substantial food, water, clothing, and light that can be sent comes from our Lord and Savior. In 2022, I want to encourage others to focus our efforts together on providing what the world truly lacks, a relationship with our living Lord Jesus Christ.

Maryland Branch

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