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Hinton Rural Life Center is a mission agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, located in rural Appalachia in Western North Carolina. Hinton Center also serves as a Christian retreat and conference center where guests come to retreat, reflect and renew.

Inspired by Jesus Christ, Hinton Rural Life Center's purpose is to engage individuals, congregations and communities in transformation through retreat ministry and missional outreach. Hinton Center is deeply rooted in the community and is a concerned catalyst for transformation with the issue of poverty, especially the challenges of generational poverty.

Recently, Hinton conducted an asset map and quality of life study of the area, and is working with community leaders to begin addressing the findings. Through Hinton's mission opportunities, home repairs are facilitated alongside local residents and families with the goal of making homes safer, warmer, and drier. This outreach has an emphasis on relationship-building and being in ministry with our neighbors. In 2016, Hinton's home repair ministry involved nearly 850 ministry partners, served approximately 70 home sites, and offered about 90 worship services.

Additionally, Hinton incorporates both a garden and firewood ministry. The garden provides ministry partners and guests with fresh food, while enabling Hinton to share the harvest with other local ministries that are actively combating food insecurity. The firewood is given to local residents using wood as their main heat source or a cost-saving alternative. Hinton meets tangible needs, while simultaneously building community with a lasting effect on those who we help and who come to help.

The ministry is more than home repairs, as Hinton serves as a training ground for discipleship and provides young adults and church groups the opportunity to live out faith actively and intentionally while serving alongside the community. With Hinton's mission outreach, the hope is to see lives transformed, both in those we work alongside and in those who come to serve. Last year, Hinton recorded 20,287 volunteer hours. Think about this: that would take one person working 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, 2.3 years to complete on their own.

Hinton Center also fosters community. Last November, during area wildfires the National Forest Service placed crews of firefighters at Hinton Center. Following their arrival, the community showed immense support for the brave men and women. Groups from all over volunteered, donated, and wrote heartfelt thank-yous. These notes started on a small scale, but soon packages carrying hundreds of letters arrived at Hinton's door, sharing messages of gratitude, respect, and love. Some children wrote about a neighbor or family member whose home was saved because of the firefighters. Others drew pictures of happy stick-figure firefighters extinguishing brightly-colored flames. In the midst of the emergency, the community rallied together in ways that some firefighters said they had never experienced.

Whether it's spending time on the back porch overlooking Lake Chatuge or going out to construct a ramp, Hinton Center offers something for everyone. Come and see for yourself! For more information, visit www.hintoncenter.org or contact 828-389-8336.