

**Hinton Rural Life Center**  
**Jacqueline Gottlieb, President and CEO**

As a mission and retreat agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) of The United Methodist Church, Hinton Rural Life Center serves the SEJ annual conferences and beyond through equipping clergy and congregations (particularly small, rural churches) and offering opportunities for individuals and church groups to serve and/or come for retreats and renewal. Its Mission: Inspired by Jesus Christ, Hinton Center serves individuals, congregations, and rural communities through retreat ministries, educational opportunities, and missional outreach.

**2023 Highlights**

- **Retreats:** In addition to hosting groups from 47 churches for missional outreach, Hinton hosted 63 retreats, including a Rural Clergy Renewal Retreat, which offered worship, meals, free time options, and conversational times with rural ministry and clergy health experts.
- **Confirmation:** Over 280 youth and adults from 23 churches participated in Hinton's four Theotokos Confirmation Retreat weekends in the spring of 2023. [www.hintontheotokos.org](http://www.hintontheotokos.org)
- **Safe and Healthy Home Assessment and Repair Ministry:** Hinton hosted 47 church mission teams and facilitated their engagement in addressing housing needs in our rural Appalachian area. The teams worked on 61 homes and completed 282 projects.
- **Firewood Ministries:** Hinton leveraged volunteer labor to gather, process, and distribute 706 loads of firewood to neighbors in the local community to those who cannot afford to heat their homes. This is a value of \$139,455 and a tremendous savings for Hinton's neighbors.
- **Volunteers:** Much of Hinton's community outreach work is completed by volunteers. In 2023 there were 1,164 unique volunteers recording 20,180 hours in service -- a value of \$602,575.

**2024 Objectives**

- **Rural Poverty Simulation:** To increase understanding about the individuals Hinton serves and to promote a "walk alongside model" of ministry, Hinton developed and offers a rural poverty simulation. Since 2023 over 460 individuals have participated in this poverty simulation, which is now packaged for use in other locations and available through Hinton's website.
- **Educational Tool Barn:** On April 15, 2024, Hinton's educational tool barn will be dedicated and launched as a new component of Hinton's Safe and Healthy Home Repair ministry. Funded by The Duke Endowment, it will equip neighbors and mission volunteers with the skills and knowledge to improve the safety and health of homes in the local community and beyond.
- **Cyle of Christian Faith Formation:** Over the years, Hinton has developed programming for youth through its Summer Mission Outreach ministry, which includes missional leadership components for high school students and college-age young people. In 2021 Hinton added *Theotokos Connections* confirmation curriculum and Theotokos Confirmation Retreats, which primarily serve middle school youth. Hinton staff are currently developing a discipleship pathway, so youth can connect with Hinton from middle school through college, creating a network of engagement that strengthens their faith formation and participation in their local churches and within The United Methodist Church. Because an important component of their faith formation is the building of relationships with adults, this fall Hinton will launch BOOM, Boomers on Outreach Mission, as another engagement opportunity in this faith formation cycle. It will be September 8-12 for adults 60 and older, replicating Hinton's summer program for youth mission teams. The goal is to increase adults' understanding of their call to support younger generations as co-disciples through this shared, connectional experience.

Just as Jesus modeled a life of loving God and neighbor through serving and teaching, Hinton continues to serve in impactful ways in its three-county area through Safe and Healthy Home Repair, firewood, Christmas Care, and other ministries, as well as focusing on generational equipping through educational ministries, such as the rural poverty simulation and educational tool barn. Following the life of discipleship modeled by Jesus, Hinton offers ministries for retreat and renewal for all ages, knowing that as Christians grow in love for God and self, they are also more able to love their neighbor in transformational ways.