

## Group blessed by ramp build

By Megan Dellinger



Nestled in the mountains near Boone lives a woman named Anita Hicks – or as her family and friends call her – Miss Annie. After surgery for a brain aneurysm, health complications from the surgery, multiple falls, and the shocking discovery of a stomach aneurysm, Miss Annie was fragile.

“At first, I couldn’t even walk.” remembered Miss Annie, age 65. “I had to learn to walk again. It’s a miracle.”

Despite walking once more, Miss Annie still struggled with leg movement and had fallen multiple times. After her last fall, she was encouraged to have a wheelchair ramp built and began to reach out for help.

“I’m not afraid to be by myself,” stated Miss Annie. “Jesus is always with me. I wouldn’t have made it through all this without Him, but I knew I needed a ramp.”

Travis Burt, Minister of Missions and Evangelism at Mount Vernon Baptist Church (MVBC) in Boone learned about Miss Annie’s need.

While at a Watauga County Baptist Associational meeting, Burt met North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) team member, Debra Kuykendall. Kuykendall, NCBAM’s west regional care director, spoke with Burt and knew Miss Annie’s ramp build would be a perfect addition to Rampin’ Up! 2016.

“I made some phone calls and connected some folks,” Kuykendall said. “Travis and his guys did the rest.”

Rampin' Up! is held every two years in conjunction with Operation Inasmuch. Through Rampin' Up!, Baptists and other volunteers have built hundreds of ramps for frail aging adults since its beginning in 2012.

On March 30, a team consisting of six young men from MVBC and Burt made the trek up the tree covered dirt road to Miss Annie's home to build her ramp.

Miss Annie welcomed the team. Before the first nail was hammered into the first piece of wood, the group took time to introduce themselves. "She is such a kind lady," Burt said.

Miss Annie shared about her health concerns, but also shared about her passion for art, especially oil painting.

"I like painting sunsets," she told the group about the artwork hanging on her living room walls. "Each one is different. Each one was first painted by God."

Kuykendall had no idea Miss Annie was so creative. NCBAM call center specialist Sarah Faircloth, who was there for the ramp build, learned that Miss Annie was crafty, too. "It was amazing! She had taken pizza boxes and used them as molds to create concrete stepping stones. Every stone was different with children's and grandchildren's names and scriptures etched into the concrete"

Burt and the other young men wanted to use the blocks as part of their project. "Miss Annie had large bags of pink pebbles," Burt said. "So, we decided to use them to create a special walkway for the stepping stones."

Miss Annie was overjoyed. She knew the perfect way to finish the walkway. She disappeared from her living room and brought back the box top of an old board game.

"I want y'all to make a stone, too" she said. "It's not a pizza box, but it will do."

Faircloth said that the group decorated the concrete stone and then wrote each of their names. "Miss Annie was so excited to have their stone included with hers."

With her ramp built and the new stone pathway constructed, the build team loaded their trucks for their drive home.

"Thank you so much," she said, turning her gaze to the completed projects, and then facing the group once more. "Thank you for not forgetting the elderly. I know God will bless you young men and I am forever grateful."

Burt said he and the build team were thankful for the opportunity to serve Miss Annie and help make her home safe.

“Burt and his group were deeply touched by Miss Annie,” Kuykendall said. “Miss Annie was in awe of the hard work of the wheelchair ramp build team. They truly blessed each other.”

**“Charity & Children,” July, 2016 Baptist Children’s Homes of NC**