



An Adopt-A-Camp get together includes fellowship and fun.

## Fruitbelt Ministry Reaches Out To Migrants

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Franklin Co. Correspondent  
**CHAMBERSBURG** (Franklin Co.) — The Rev. Ray Kauffman compares the migrant farmworker population to residents of Third World countries. But he ministers to them face to face, something local churches rarely have the chance to do with people from the Third World.

"It's easy to send money to Third World countries for missions. This is an opportunity to minister at home," Kauffman said. "These people are coming to our backyard. They have a different culture, language, and socio-economic background."

Kauffman, 58, is the director of Fruitbelt Farmworker Christian Ministry, with headquarters in Chambersburg. The year-round ministry covers Franklin, Adams, and Cumberland counties and is supported by numerous churches in the area.

It's hard for Kauffman, a United Methodist pastor since 1980, to say exactly how many people he and his staff reach. "The migrant population is hard to count; everyone has a different idea," he said. "A good estimate is 4-5,000 in the three-county area."

About 2,500 live in 120 camps

in the orchards; the rest have private housing. The population peaks the week after Labor Day, during the apple harvest, although some migrant farmworkers arrive earlier to pick peaches.

About 200 farmworker families live in the area year-round, Kauffman said. They prune trees or work in other industries over the winter.

About 80 percent of the farmworkers are Mexican and Puerto Rican, with the rest coming from Florida, the Carolinas, Georgia, Jamaica and Haiti. Fruitbelt has two Hispanic interpreters on its staff, and one interpreter who speaks both Spanish and French Creole.

"The farmworkers are in a foreign country and a foreign culture," Kauffman said. "We tell them that they are not alone, that God is with them, and that we of the church are supportive of them. Jesus said to go into the highways and byways. We're going to where the people are."

For about 40 years, each county had its own committee of volunteers who ministered to the migrant farmworkers. In 1989, they came together and formed Fruitbelt, and Kauffman became its director.

Fruitbelt is coordinated through the Pennsylvania Council of Churches but receives no funds from them or from the government. The group's major fundraiser is selling gift boxes of fresh and packaged fruit from local growers.

"It's all local fruit picked by the workers we minister to," Kauffman said. They sold 650 of the boxes last year, and expect to sell 1,000 this year.

Fruitbelt's goal is to improve the quality of life for all persons in the fruitbelt.

To further this goal, Kauffman speaks to groups about Fruitbelt and trains outreach workers. He collects resources such as health kits (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, towel, washcloth, toilet paper, razors and shaving cream), blankets, layettes, diapers, and financial support. "When the farmworkers come, we have to be ready," he said.

Fruitbelt's most visible outreach is the Adopt-A-Camp program, in which area churches befriend farmworker camps for the season. This year, churches have adopted 21 of the 120 camps.

Mary Cole of Fayetteville participates in the program with Fall-

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Holiday fruitboxes, as pictured, are sold to help provide needs for migrant farmworkers. For mail order, send name and address and \$28 for each gift pack. Make check or money order payable to FFCM and send to Fruitbelt Farmworker Christian Ministry, P.O. Box 1183, Chambersburg, PA 17201 or phone (717) 261-0448.

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