

New Year Brings Big Transition For Winebarks

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 should be used for something other than the previous plans."

The kids are ecstatic with the find. One high school senior said, "I knew somewhere God had a place and he wouldn't let us down. I couldn't live without On Fire" (the name of the youth group).

The Myerstown gym is within one and a half miles of the Winebarks' home. The size of the gymnasium allows the teens to break into various groups to talk or participate in different sport activities.

A man from the Winebarks church, Richland Church of the Brethren, provides bus transportation for about 30 to 40 percent of the group. The remainder car pool or find their own transportation.

They are thrilled that Ralph Warren, a graduate from Teen Challenge, a Christian drug and alcohol rehabilitation program, became involved in the outreach.

"Ralph is 6'4" and a great basketball player. He plays the guitar and has great rapport with the kids," Winebark said. "And most importantly, he's not afraid to hit the kids square in the eye (tell them the honest truth even if it hurts)."

Typically of their generosity, the Winebarks opened their home to Ralph, who needed a place to stay. After living with them several months, he now has an apartment of his own. The Winebarks have also kept some teens in their home overnight who struggle with severe problems.

The Winebarks see their ministry as more to the whole family rather than only to teens. When problems arise between parents and the teens, the Winebarks are strong supporters in helping them work out their differences.

With two children of their own,

Janine, 10, and Brandon, 8, the most pressing problem for the Winebarks is finding time for everything.

"It got to the point where I knew that I had to make some changes," said Ken, who shared his dilemma with his pastor, who told him that he sensed God had something special for him to do, and that he felt Winebark was called to be a youth minister.

"I was shocked and scared but I knew inside it was the truth," Ken said.

When he shared this insight with Janet, he was surprised when she calmly said that she knew Ken was called to be a youth pastor for a long time.

Ironically, it was on New Year's Day last year that the Winebarks made the decision to go into full-time youth ministry.

Perhaps leaving his extension agent job would not be so difficult if Winebark didn't like his job, but that isn't the case.

"I'm leaving something I really love," Winebark said of his work as extension agent for the past 10 and a half years. "It's been so rewarding to see 8- and 9-year-olds develop into respected leaders in 4-H, as state dairy princesses, and leaders of respected agricultural organizations."

"The change means leaving go of some very important things in my life," Winebark said. "It's leaving my affiliation with agriculture — something I thought would always be part of my life."

Another difficult reason for giving up his job is that Ken firmly believes he works for the best boss in the world — Alletta Schadler, Lebanon County extension director.

Schadler herself gets a bit

choked up about Winebark leaving. She said, "His enthusiasm for his job has been most delightful. He has a 'can do' attitude. Ken is always going that extra mile to help people with problems. He has a wonderful record of keeping kids involved in 4-H. He has always gone way beyond the call of duty to create activities and events to teach young people how to succeed in agriculture. His leadership also extended to the non-farming community and has helped them better understand agriculture and how it affects us all."

Winebark said, "Lettie's truly been the best boss in the world. But now, I'm going to work for the boss of the world."

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For a while Winebark had considered teaching animal science at a local college on a part-time basis, but he realized that he could not give his all to two jobs.

"Jesus gave His all for me, the least I can do is give my all," Winebark said of his decision to devote full time to youth ministry.

It's a new venture not only for Winebark but also his church, which cannot afford to support the family financially. However, the church has set up a fund for people to donate money to support the Winebarks on a missionary basis.

While some people express alarm that Winebark is quitting his job with a stable income to take one that has no guaranteed income, the Winebarks are not at all

concerned.

"We have faith that God's going to take care of us. We have absolutely no fear about finances. God did too many miracles and led us this far," Winebark said.

The Winebarks have a cache of stories about God's care for them. Not the least of which is allowing he and Janine to show the top gilts and market hogs at the state Farm Show.

"It was always Daddy's (Ken's) big dream to win at the Farm Show when he was growing up, but he never did," Janet said.

In Janine's first year in 4-H last year, she chose a pig that was trampled on and should have died. In fact, the vet suggested the Winebarks dispose of it, but Janine was

After a hastily organized family conference, the Winebarks decided to donate the prize money back into the Farm Show scholarship fund.

Since then, Winebark was offered \$1,000 for the sow that produced the gilt, but the family cannot part with family pet that rolls over when her belly is scratched.

It's examples like this that have built the Winebarks' faith that God is a God of miracles who will provide whatever is needed.

The couple say they are not big spenders. Although Janet is a full-time mother and has not brought in additional income, the Winebarks made their last mortgage payment in December on the 5 1/2 -acre property that they purchased 10 years ago.

Winebark admits that financial concerns have never bothered him. He lets his wife take care of bill paying. Although Janet had told him that she felt impressed to make double payments on their mortgage for quite some time, Winebark was surprised to find out that the month he had designated as his first month in full-time ministry was the month after the final mortgage payment was made.

Despite the absence of a mortgage payment, money is still needed to support the family, but the Winebarks are so assured of their calling that they do not waver in their belief that God will provide.

Donations earmarked for the Winebarks may be sent to Richland Church of the Brethren, 215 S. Race St. Box 677, Richland, PA 17087.



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