

Together We Touch Lives



Oklahoma Disciples Foundation, Inc.

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Caminante: "A Mission of Hope & Love"

For the last decade, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma (CCIO) has been a presence in the seaside town of Boca Chica, Dominican Republic, as a global ministries partner through Caminante.

There are many vulnerable children living in this beach town who are working as shoe shiners, day laborers, or in other occupations on the street in order to support their families. Due to the increase in the tourism industry in this popular resort destination and the closure



of several sugar cane processing plants, children (boys and girls) have desperately turned to prostitution for survival. However, Oklahomans are making a difference and children, teenagers and families have hope for the future through participation in Caminante.

Caminante, meaning "One Who Walks the Path," is a

grass-roots organization made up of people who have first-hand knowledge of the struggles facing youth and children in their community. The project provides a safe space where hundreds of youth and their families can receive counseling and participate in healthy recreational and formation programs. In coordination with local government and non-governmental agencies, victims of sexual abuse and exploitation can also receive special attention and services. Many current staff members are former participants in the program who lived on the streets or had little support from a family.

Their mission is to promote participation, encourage empowerment and personal growth for the construction and recovery of healthy environments (family, school, peers, and community) with shared values such as solidarity, honesty, respect, and peace. They do this through education and recreational activities teaching Christian values.

In April, five individuals from four Oklahoma Disciples churches visited Caminante. They worked with children in Caminante homework rooms which assist with remedial education and social service support to the street children. They also worked with Haitian children and teenagers trying to escape the brutal conditions in Haiti in order to start a new life in the Dominican Republic.

The Oklahoma group took six suitcases containing clothing, dental supplies, sports equipment, school supplies, craft supplies and items for cosmetology students.

In July, eleven people from seven churches will visit Caminante. They will work in the Caminante annual community summer fair, a Vacation Bible School-like program, which will host approximately 800 children in various local communities over four weeks. Many of the children will be given shoes, clothing and dental supplies at the fair. And, the lunch they receive each day may be the only substantial food they eat that particular day.

The Foundation's grant program awarded \$3,500 to help with costs for providing supplies and sending Oklahoma Disciples to assist with the July community summer fair. However, there is ongoing work to be done in this community as the need for this ministry continues to grow.

To donate directly to Oklahoma's Caminante ministry, checks may be mailed to CCIO, 301 NW 36th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73118 (or donate online at their website www.okdisciples.org). Please be sure to specify CCIO-Caminante.

Two ODF endowment funds benefit ministries like Caminante: Children, Youth and Young Adults and NWCC Memorial Mission. Online donations may be made at www.okdfd.org. Select either fund from the dropdown list.

A Caminante Testimony

As an eight-year old, each Monday Franklin walked 10 miles to work the streets and beaches of Boca Chica. He sold candy to people and shined shoes for tourists to help support his family because his mother had no job or money.

He would go to back doors of restaurants and beg for food. And, he would sleep in doorways because it was too far to go home every night. On weekends, he would return home and take his meager earnings to his mother.

He wondered: "Is there anybody who really cares about me? Is there anybody who loves me and can give me hope? Is there anyone who can hug me and give me a sense of belonging?"

One day, he placed a folded piece of paper under the door of the Catholic Church. It read, "If anyone reads this note, I love you."

The priest found it and contacted Sister Denisse, Caminante Founder, who arranged for a safe place for Franklin to sleep. She made sure he stayed in school. And because of his potential, she made sure he went to college.

Franklin became a teacher in the Oklahoma homework room.

He later married and began to raise a family. As of three years ago, Franklin was a single father raising eight children. His wife died after giving birth to their last child. The Caminante staff told Franklin his family needed him and it was alright to leave the staff in order to make more money.

Franklin told the staff, "Sister Denisse found me, she helped me and Caminante gave me hope. The kids here are just like me working the streets and beaches. They need an education. They need me and I need them. There are more important things than money. I am going to stay at Caminante where I can make a difference."

During a recent Caminante mission trip, Oklahomans visited Franklin teaching in a homework room. The 35 children present were listening intently to every word Franklin said. He said, "Oklahoma makes a difference. I hope, and the children hope, you can continue to support us."

And, the children said: "Gracious Oklahoma. Don't forget us. Come again. Come soon."

STAFF & BOARD NEWS

In Memory of Steven Cox

We were saddened to learn one of our newest board members passed away suddenly on February 24, 2018. Steven K. Cox, Durant, OK, had excitedly accepted an invitation to join the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation Board for a 3-year term beginning 2018. He attended new board member orientation in January and had volunteered to share his expertise and knowledge by serving on the Marketing Committee.

In communications with Steven just prior to the February board meeting, he was planning to attend both the board meeting and Clif Christopher speaker event in early March in Moore, Oklahoma. He shared his love for his fur-babies and had already made plans for their care while he was at these events.

Steven was born December 16, 1958, in Waco, Texas. He was raised in Durant, Oklahoma and graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SOSU) with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. Following graduation, he moved to Dallas, Texas where he worked in the graphics and advertising industry for over 30 years.

Steven founded Graphic Detail, Inc., in 1988 and served as President and CEO until its sale in 1999. In 2000, he worked freelance for several large companies including Dr. Pepper/Seven Up, PepsiCo Foods and a variety of other national brands. During his professional career he served as an officer on the boards of the Dallas Litho Club (affiliated with the Printing Industries of America) as well as the Print Production Association of Dallas.

During his time in Dallas, Steven was actively involved with the LGBTQ community. During the AIDS crisis of the 1980s he helped establish a buddy program through the Oak Lawn Counseling Center. In 1985, he received an award as Buddy-of-the-Year.

He served on the board of the Federal Club (major donors to the Human Rights Campaign) for five years. His proudest work was with the Black Tie Dinner of Dallas where he served for 10 years. In that time the distribution of cash to the LGBTQ community and the HRC Foundation increased from \$50,000 to over \$1,000,000.

In 2012, Steven returned to his beloved hometown of Durant. Once the move was complete, he joined the First Christian Church where he actively served by singing in the choir, participating in weekly Tuesday night fellowship with college students, assisted with church outreach and served as vice chair of the board of directors.

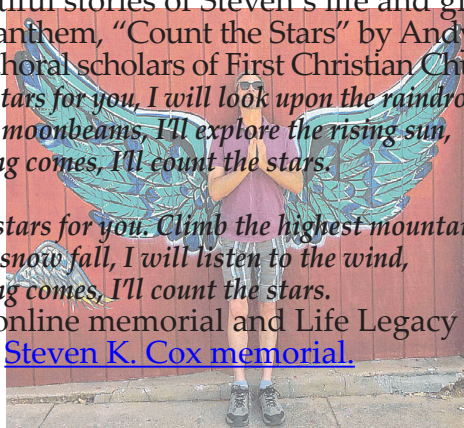
Steven was one of those rare individuals who exuded spirit, humor and confidence. He was a gift to all who met him. Many of Steven's friends, colleagues and college ministry students attended his Celebration of Life at First Christian Church in Durant, Oklahoma. They shared beautiful stories of Steven's life and gifts.

The following anthem, "Count the Stars" by Andy Beck, was sung at his service by the Choral scholars of First Christian Church in his memory:

*I will count the stars for you, I will look upon the raindrops and the morning dew.
 I will search the moonbeams, I'll explore the rising sun,
 And when evening comes, I'll count the stars.*

*I will count the stars for you. Climb the highest mountain, cross the ocean, too.
 I will watch the snow fall, I will listen to the wind,
 And when evening comes, I'll count the stars.*

A permanent online memorial and Life Legacy for Steven can be found at this link: [Steven K. Cox memorial](#).



Merle A. Phillips

Former board member, Merle A. Phillips, passed away on Monday, March 26, 2018, in Oklahoma City.

Merle was born February 24, 1936, in Enid, OK, and grew up in Kremlin, OK. He attended both Oklahoma A&M (Oklahoma State University) and Wichita State University where he met his wife Phyllis.

He had a long career as a speech pathologist/audiologist including serving as a professor at Phillips University and working as an audiologist at Dr. Jack Hough's Otologic Medical Clinic in Oklahoma City where he was a member of the initial cochlear implant development team in connection with Integris Baptist Medical Center.

Merle was a long-time, active member of Central Christian Church in Enid.

ODF Welcomes Holly Day

The Foundation is pleased to announce Holly Day has joined the staff as Administrative Assistant.

Holly brings over 20 years of accounting, office and administrative experience with her from both the private and non-profit sectors.



Raised in Oklahoma and a lifelong Disciple, Holly grew up attending Putnam City Christian Church.

She and her husband Dale have been married for 15 years and live in NW Oklahoma City with their two children Derek (11) and Darby (8).

They are members of New Covenant Christian Church, where Holly teaches preschool Sunday School and serves as a youth sponsor.

In her spare time, Holly enjoys watching OU football, Thunder basketball and vacationing with family.