Celebrating the past as we move forward

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has a long and diverse history. Since 1917, this organization has been at the center of worldwide progressive movements in the areas of peace, civil rights and economic justice.

Since 1948, the work has been organized through a regional structure, allowing for maximum impact at the grassroots level.

At its November 2011 meeting, the Board of Directors of AFSC approved a new regional structure to support U.S. programs, moving from nine regions to four: the Northeast, Midwest, West and South.

The change in administrative structure keeps all existing program offices open. The new South Region includes the former Southeast Region (SERO) programs based in North Carolina, Atlanta, Miami and New Orleans and the former Middle Atlantic Region (MAR) programs based in Baltimore, West Virginia and Washington, D.C. The Pittsburgh program, formerly in MAR, has moved to the Northeast Region.

While the new regions cover a larger geography, we are confident that the new structure will allow us to devote more of our resources to direct program work and less to administration.

This newsletter celebrates the work of the Middle Atlantic Region and the Southeast Regions during the past 64 tumultuous years. We take a look back at amazing achievements, dynamic people and critical events that we now see were historically significant. (Please see highlights of the work in the timelines on pages 4-7.)

Bonnie Erica Horton is the newly appointed regional director of the South Region, based in Atlanta. Brooke McDonald is the associate regional director, working out of the Baltimore office. (Please see messages from Bonnie and Brooke on page 2.)

Along with the new administrative structure for the South region, a new executive committee is forming to provide oversight and support for regional programs. Many of the members of the new committee are drawn from the previous executive committees of MAR and SERO.

With the help of our many friends, partners and supporters, we will navigate this transition with energy and creativity, finding ways to strengthen our grassroots work, to encourage a collaborative learning environment, and to ensure timely responses to unfolding events in the world where AFSC’s spirit-led witness can truly make a difference.
I am pleased to write to you as the Regional Director for the South Region. Starting at the conclusion of transitions that have taken place over the past years, I feel a new energy within the region.

I am excited to work with staff members to safeguard thriving peace, social and economic justice programs already in place. I am also eager to invigorate our current work with new initiatives and approaches, explore collaborations amongst programs, and continue to measure the impact of this transformative work.

As our General Secretary Shan Cretin likes to say, our best work is grounded in the grassroots. It is a mix of community organizing, advocacy, education, capacity building, and creative demonstrations of alternatives to broken economic, political and social systems.

The impact of our work rises to even greater heights when we connect local grassroots work to something larger—national and international movements and issues—

As we move into this new structure, we will take care to retain the values and spirit that successfully guided the work of the Middle Atlantic and Southeast regions over the years.

In my role as Regional Director, I will work to ensure that South Region resources are expended in a manner that allows for the ‘highest level of impact.’

As we work to solve some of the complex problems facing our world, my focus will not be on massively scaling up or spreading any single social innovation – but rather trying to ensure that our work connects the dots across issues with both likely and unlikely partners. Internally, and externally, we will continue to focus on aligning our strategies, methods and actions to leverage significant, meaningful change!

My time with AFSC has been very short in comparison to many of our supporters. As we put together a timeline of a few (we could not fit them all!) key programmatic achievements for each region, I felt very deep appreciation to many generations of volunteers and donors who made AFSC’s work possible.

So many of the success stories would not have happened without the donation of funds and time from you, our friends who stood with communities struggling for economic security, just and accountable institutions and non-violent solutions to conflict.

I would like to say thank you for your unwavering support and generosity. We truly appreciate that you have joined us in this journey. Without you, none of the work we do would be possible!

I would like to say a very special thank you to our regional executive committee members, both past and present. Your contributions over the years: choices to invest in new programs, constructive feedback about project design, and unwavering support – were invaluable.

To all of you who have supported AFSC’s work to create a society that respects the individual dignity and light of the divine in all, a huge “Thank you!”
Quiet little civil rights project’ to mark 50th anniversary in North Carolina

The year was 1963, and the South was still segregated when the American Friends Service Committee and residents of rural Warrenton, N.C., came together to launch the Citizenship Education Project, aimed at encouraging voter registration and civic activism among the impoverished black majority population.

Judy Beil Vaughan, then 19 years old, was one of the young people who answered the call to come to Warrenton to participate in what she calls “this quiet little civil rights project.” Vaughan, 13 other college students and three adult leaders became the first interracial group to live together in Warren County.

Warrenton resident Eva Clayton was a guiding force behind the project. Clayton teamed with rural ministers to sponsor educational workshops where the students could provide information about voting procedures and registration. Altogether, the Citizenship Education Project conducted more than 30 workshops in Warren, Henderson, Green and Vance counties. The work began just weeks after the murder of Medgar Evers and ended a few days before the historic 1963 March on Washington, Vaughan said.

Last year, veterans of the Citizenship Education Project gathered to reminisce and to make plans to return to Warrenton for the 50th anniversary celebration of the project that helped shape so many of their lives.

Using photos, diaries, letters and personal stories from participants, Vaughan is compiling a history of the project. In March, she and fellow group member Jane Luton visited Warrenton, where they met with Clayton and Dorothy Gill Waddell, another member of the group. As they walked through the streets of the town and passed by the black churches where they conducted their workshops, Vaughan said she thought about that group of young people who once helped make history.

“I don’t know if the project drew altruistic people, or if they were affected by what they did there, but so many of them went into the helping professions,” she said. Vaughan herself became a physician who cared for low-income families.

The Citizenship Education Project also had an impact on the community. A Warrenton resident commented that the project “eliminated a lot of fear.” It also laid the groundwork for Eva Clayton’s election to Congress in 1992. Clayton was the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from North Carolina.

The September 2013 reunion will include an event in which community participants and their descendants will be recognized. AFSC is offering support for the reunion, according to Ann Lennon, director of AFSC’s Peace & Justice Program in Greensboro, NC.

“Former Southeast Regional director Will Hartzler gave support to this program, and I feel very honored to have connected with this history,” Lennon said.

Persons interested in remembering the project or participating in the reunion may contact Judy (Beil) Vaughan at jfbvaughan@comcast.net.
A commitment to civil rights

In the early years of the Southeast Region, the Greensboro, NC, office focused on interracial Peace Education events. Many times the challenge of finding a venue was the greatest obstacle.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s Brown v. Board of Education decision, the AFSC started a School Desegregation Program. In 1957 Greensboro City Schools decided to accept desegregation without a court order. Southeast Region Executive Secretary B. Tartt Bell wrote a letter of thanks to the superintendent of schools.

That same year, AFSC consulted with North Carolina school systems in Greensboro and Winston-Salem to develop resources for school desegregation. Staff members helped schools prepare by organizing talks with the governor, school superintendents, newspaper editors, school board members and parents. An interracial seminar for teachers and principals examined the desegregation process.

Southeast Region Timeline

The Southeast office was officially opened in 1948, but AFSC was active in the area before it became a “region.” From economic justice work during the depression, to civil rights work in the mid-20th Century, to current work on immigrant rights and peace, the region has always come to the aid of those in need.

Howard Brinton visited Army camps in NC to identify and educate conscientious objectors on behalf of AFSC.

AFSC established a presence in Marion, NC, supporting striking textile workers and reconciling a community divided over economic justice issues.

In cooperation with the Congregational Council for Social Action, the AFSC held an Institute of International Relations at the University of North Carolina.

Southeast Regional office moved from Greensboro to High Point, NC.

AFSC started a School Desegregation Project in Southeast Region.

Students in Jackson, TN, carried out educational programs to encourage African Americans to register as voters.

AFSC enabled 90 migrant families in FL to build or buy their own homes.

AFSC school desegregation work expanded into SC and VA.


Southeast Region formed, based in Greensboro, NC. B. Tartt Bell was the first executive secretary.

"Interns in Industry" project started in Atlanta, GA. Participants found their own internships and lived in houses provided by AFSC.

Greensboro City Schools accepted desegregation without a court order.

Merit Employment Office opened in Atlanta, GA.

Seven college-aged volunteers worked with the Merit Employment program to locate jobs open to qualified high school graduates in Greensboro.

Sara Herbin, a director of AFSC’s Merit Employment Program, was appointed by the North Carolina governor as an employment service representative to encourage employment of African Americans in state companies. She was the first African American member of Gov. Terry Sanford’s cabinet.
Throughout the 1960s, AFSC’s school desegregation expanded in the South, moving into Virginia, South Carolina and Alabama.

In 1970, AFSC, partnering with another civil rights group, conducted a survey of 300 southern school systems. The study revealed that federal funds intended to halt discrimination were being widely used to deepen it.

In 1971, AFSC helped local groups in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina gain access to school district plans and compare the plans with federal requirements and resources. AFSC helped obtain grants that exceeded half a million dollars for the local groups.

Following this work, AFSC facilitated the exchange of experience among concerned groups in these four states, kept federal agencies alert to specific needs and problems and conferred with other civil rights organizations on legal and community action strategies with particular emphasis on defeating new schemes to perpetuate discriminatory practices.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>The AFSC printed and distributed 275,000 copies of a letter written by Martin Luther King, Jr., during his confinement in the city jail of Birmingham, Alabama.</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>AFSC worked to promote school desegregation in southern states throughout the 1960s and 1970s.</td>
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<td>1968</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>AFSC in Miami collaborated with the official consulates from El Salvador and Mexico, and, in a two-month period, spoke to at least 610 nationals from those counties about how to get national IDs and/or passports.</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>New Miami program focused on problem of joblessness among African American youths.</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>AFSC staff addressed Apartheid laws in South Africa and raised the issue of divestment of stocks and bonds.</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>The Gulf Coast Program was organized in response to Hurricane Katrina. Today, the focus is on New Orleans, where it is one of only a few ongoing projects organized by national non-profits.</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>After Hurricane Andrew hit, AFSC linked relief information to underserved farmworker communities.</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>South Carolina program helped low-income women overcome isolation, lack of access to information and exclusion from jobs. In the 1980s it became known as Women in the Workforce.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>AFSC in Miami helped a group of VA women form Help Empower Local People to address issues of hunger, malnutrition and employment. In Atlanta, the Student Career Alternatives Program (SCAP) provided resources and alternatives to the military to more than 20,000 GA students.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>NC program helped low-income women overcome isolation, lack of access to information and exclusion from jobs. In the 1980s it became known as Women in the Workforce. In Charlotte, NC, AFSC helped immigrants and refugees share their stories through a digital storytelling project.</td>
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The Middle Atlantic Region Office was officially opened in 1949, but work was done in our “region” long before! Since the beginning, the region has worked on issues of economic and racial justice, prison reform, and ultimately, always – peace.

**Middle Atlantic Region Timeline**

- **1922**: AFSC initiates humanitarian assistance efforts in the WV and PA coalfields.
- **1931**: The Friends Health Service was established in Logan County, WV.
- **1933**: AFSC launches relief program that fed 40,000 miners’ children in 41 Appalachian counties.
- **1937**: On July 5, 1922, the New York Times reported that the American Friends Service Committee was initiating efforts to provide basic humanitarian assistance for families in the coalfields of West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

In 1931 President Herbert Hoover asked the AFSC to step in once more to provide relief for the children of unemployed mine workers in the bituminous coalfields.

In response, the AFSC launched a program that would feed 40,000 miners’ children in 41 counties in six Appalachian states. Volunteers are shown distributing milk in the 1930s Ben Shahn photo, center left.

- **1949**: AFSC began four years of work to peacefully integrate D.C. city schools.
- **1951**: The Middle Atlantic Region office opened in Philadelphia under the leadership of E.A. “Red” Schaal.
- **1956**: An Institute of International Relations was launched in Syracuse, NY, to support peace work.
- **1962**: Upper New York State office opened in Syracuse and began work with the Mohawk community of Akwesasne.
- **1964**: Washington, DC, and Pittsburgh programs addressed issue of pre-trial justice for minorities and low-income individuals.
- **1967**: Youth program initiated in Pittsburgh brought together young people from black and white communities to address social injustices.
- **1969**: MAR office moves to Baltimore.
- **1970**: AFSC began programs with rural migrant families in PA and NJ.
- **1976**: In 1937 AFSC formed Penn-Craft, a self-help housing project for miners in PA, was formed.
- **1979**: AFSC began programs with rural migrant families in PA and NJ.

**Aid to the coalfields**

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**Investigation by our representatives in the coalfields of the two states indicate that a very serious condition exists among the children in families dependent upon the mining industry.** Already a number are developing tuberculosis on account of malnutrition and there are hundreds of children who are without necessary food … Without discussing any of the issues involved in the present controversy in the coal industry, the American Friends Service Committee believes that industrial strife does not justify the starving of innocent people.” – Wilbur K. Thomas, secretary, AFSC Home Service Committee

**Penn-Craft, a self-help housing project for miners in PA, was formed.**

In 1937 AFSC formed Penn-Craft, a self-help housing project for miners in Fayette County, Pennsylvania. AFSC Executive Secretary Clarence Pickett pitched his “dream for a new community for coal miners in western Pennsylvania” to executives from U.S. Steel, including an aged J.P. Morgan. The company agreed to give $75,000 to the project. The AFSC purchased a 200-acre dairy farm northwest of Uniontown. To those selected, the AFSC committees awarded plots of land, averaging between 1.5 and three acres, on which to build their homes and cultivate their farmsteads. There was also a cooperatively run farm. Homes were made of stone from a nearby quarry (photo, right).
Pennsylvania Farm Labor Plan offered 60 recommendations to protect seasonal farm workers.

WV Economic Justice Project formed to address policy issues affecting low-income and working people.

Help Increase the Peace developed in response to the murder of a member of an AFSC youth group member in Syracuse. It led to today’s Youth Empowerment program.

WV Economic Justice Project provided strike support for steelworkers at the Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation.

The VetNet Project was established at the Maryland House of Corrections, beginning a decade of program work in the Maryland Prison System.

The PA State Program was reestablished in Pittsburgh, working on peace-building through dialogue and listening.

AFSC-DC led a grassroots effort to make DC the first Human Rights City in the United States.

When the worst mining disaster in decades took the lives of 29 miners in WV, AFSC donated the services of a staff member to the governor’s investigatory panel. She served as chief writer of the panel’s report, which resulted in charges against company officials and a renewed interest in worker safety legislation.

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1970 Bernice Just, a Middle Atlantic Region staff member in Washington, DC, and a group of law students interviewed 597 men awaiting trial in District of Columbia Jails. She reported that “one had been confined 35 months, 11 others in excess of 18 months, and another 11 for a full year or more. Still another 72 men had been in jail for at least six months…” The DC office worked to secure pre-trial justice for minorities and low income groups.

In the same year Paul Wahrhaftig began work with AFSC in Pittsburgh, also concentrating on the issue of bail reform. Young people compiled statistical evidence on the difference between the way the bail system worked in white suburbs and the way it worked in urban centers. This work eventually evolved into the then-emerging concept of community dispute resolution. Paul served on many task forces and planning groups that helped to chart the field of conflict resolution – ultimately serving as a resource to those in the field throughout the country. From Paul’s perspective conflict resolution is “more than a profession, it is a social movement.”

In 1976, the DC office published Emeshed, left, a report on the problems of the criminal justice process based on the casework of 569 persons.

The work in the District of Columbia and Pittsburgh laid the groundwork for today’s AFSC work addressing the criminal justice system and conflict resolution.

Criminal justice and conflict resolution

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