**IN LIFE**
BATTERIES NOT INCLUDEDRetiree designs, builds wooden toys **1F****IN VALLEY & STATE**
DAUGHTER SHAVES HEAD FOR MOM'S CANCER FIGHT 1B**IN BUSINESS | GETTING IT THERE**Christmas holiday always means big business for area shippers **1E****IN SPORTS****WVU BEATS RADFORD; MARSHALL FALLS TO UK 1D**

Sunday Gazette-Mail

THE STATE'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

wvgazette.com

Getting healthy through FITNESS & FELLOWSHIP



KATE LONG | Sunday Gazette-Mail photos

Coal trucks barrel past Mingo County's Little Dove Baptist Church, but the Fitness and Fellowship group found a way to walk anyhow. Fifteen times around the church is a mile. Since June, the group has scored big drops in blood sugar, blood pressure and weight.

Little Dove Baptist shows: 'It's something any church could easily do'

By **Kate Long**
Staff writer

BELO — On Tuesdays and Thursdays, when the weather's good, you can see them out there, walking around and around church, 20 or 30 of them, circling the Little Dove Independent Baptist Church.

THE SHAPE WE'RE IN

Some stride. A few hobble along with canes. "I may be in first gear, but I get there," said 72-year-old Wanda Maynard.

Last spring, they figured out that 15 times around the church is a mile.

"In Mingo County, if you try walking on the road, you risk getting flattened by a coal truck," said Pastor Jimmy Maynard (no relation to Wanda). A few hundred feet away, coal trucks whiz by on narrow, twisty W.Va. 65, a steep hill on one side, a creek on the other.

"They don't let coal trucks stop them," said Dr. Patty Jo Marcum, their medical adviser. She grew up in the 132-year-old church. "We're a close bunch," she said. "I'm so proud of them."

They started exercising last spring. Jesus was a healer, Pastor Maynard noted. "We had sisters and brothers with sugar problems, knee problems, arthri-



Pastor Jimmy Maynard of the Little Dove Baptist Church tells visiting officials from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that, by walking, he has cut his blood sugar and cholesterol in half.

Declare war on diabetes in West Virginia, feds urge

By **Kate Long**
Staff writer

BELO — One day in late October, a van with "Jay Rockefeller" on the doors rolled into the Little Dove Baptist Church parking lot. Out climbed officials from the Centers for Disease Control, the Appalachian Regional Commission and the West Virginia Bureau of Public Health.

They'd come to admire Little Dove's Fitness and Fellowship program. They came because they're worried about West Virginia's high

diabetes rate.

Inside the rural Mingo County church, person after person testified about big drops in blood sugar, depression, blood pressure and weight. "The exercise helps everyone, whether they've got diabetes, heart trouble, arthritis, whatever," said Pastor Jimmy Maynard.

The CDC officials never stopped smiling.

Individuals might not be able to change the processed food industry, CDC official Ann Albright said, but they

SEE **DIABETES**, 8A

tis and heart problems, and we decided it was time for us to step up," he said. "When the body's fit, the spirit's more likely to be fit, too."

"I advised them to walk and stretch," Marcum said. "They created their own program from there. They have such a good time together, they keep coming back, and I'm telling you, they're getting results."

■ When they started, Wanda Maynard couldn't walk half way around the church. Now she makes six or eight times without puffing. Last May, she needed 20 units of insulin a day. Now she takes four to seven units.

■ Pastor Maynard discovered in June that he has Type 2 diabetes. Since then, he has lost more than 60 pounds, dropped his pants size from 50 to 44 and cut his blood sugar and cholesterol in half.

■ Tom Sloane used to ride his lawnmower down the hill to the mailbox because he was afraid he couldn't walk back up. "Now I walk down the hill and walk back up," he said. He had rotator cuff surgery last summer. "This walking appears to have lubricated my rotator joints," he said.

■ Wib Thompson organizes the walks. His early morning blood sugar used to run at about 225. Now it's about 120.

■ Last spring, Marcum told

SEE **LITTLE DOVE**, 8A**PUBLIC SCHOOL SAFETY**

Local police in schools a hot topic

With federal funding drying up, school boards urged to act

By **Mackenzie Mays**
Staff writer

Local boards of education can make a significant impact on school safety, especially when it comes to recruiting police officers to patrol campus, officials say.

With major cuts to federal funding over the years, only 64 of West Virginia's more than 800 public schools have a prevention resource officer patrolling the halls. None of those are elementary schools.

About a third of those officers are locally funded, while the rest are supported by about \$800,000 in federal grants that were awarded to the state in 2012, according to the West Virginia Division of Justice & Community Services.

Leslie Boggess, deputy director of the division, said the schools with PROs in the building are "the lucky ones," and since the program started 15 years ago, requests for an officer have dramatically increased while funding has decreased.

"It's safe to say that having an officer in the school is better than not having an officer there."

"It's safe to say that having an officer in the school is better than not having an officer there."

LESLIE BOGGESS
W.Va. Division of Justice & Community Services**INSIDE:** Citizens Defense League 'quite displeased' with Manchin **9A**

It would be wonderful if we could have them in every school, but we don't have any control over the federal budget," Boggess said. "We recommend looking to local funds. Your local school board is always the safest place to go, but county commissions and others will probably be willing to contribute. Federal grants are continuing to decrease."

PROs are not only trained to respond to dangerous school situations, but also provide mentoring services and talk to students about issues such as underage drinking and drug abuse.

SEE **SCHOOLS**, 9A**EMERGENCY SERVICES**

\$33M tower project to go online June 30

Upgrade nearly doubles network's capacity

By **Eric Eyre**
Staff writer

West Virginia has started testing a \$33 million upgrade to its emergency communications tower network — a project designed to bolster public safety and make Internet available to homes in rural communities.

The two-year project, funded by the federal economic stimulus, expands the state's existing 90-tower network. The improvements are expected to nearly double the network's capacity for voice and data communications. The tower network also will likely link up with a national public safety system.

"You could stand on the steps of the U.S. Capitol and talk to the state Capitol here in West Virginia," said state Homeland Security Director Jimmy Gianato, who helped lead a tour of a tower site atop Malden Mountain last week.

The \$33 million is paying for new radio equipment and satellite dishes at existing tower sites, and up to 17 new towers across

the state. Workers have finished erecting a dozen towers, with five more expected to be finished within the next two months.

State officials hope to have the expanded tower network up and running by June 30.

"You're going to be able to put much more [information and data] on there on the broadband side," said Joe Gonzalez, communications director with state

SEE **TOWERS**, 8A**Note on coupons**

Because of the Christmas holiday, there are no national coupons included with today's Sunday Gazette-Mail.

INDEX | 2A



6 04519 00100 0

LITTLE DOVE

FROM PAGE 1A

her grandmother, 79-year-old Beulah Davis, that her blood sugar was so high that she was going to have to go on medication. "I walked it back down," Beulah said.

"What Little Dove is doing is simple, straightforward and doable," said the Rev. Jeff Allen, director of the West Virginia Council of Churches. "It doesn't cost them anything. It's something any church could easily do."

"Most churches have a nurse or doctor who can help them," Marcum said.

"If every West Virginia church did what Little Dove is doing with just 10 people, that would be 30,000 people with better health," Allen said. "Think about that."

There are roughly 3,000 churches in West Virginia. "Churches can be an important part of the answer to our health problems," he said. "It's got me thinking how we could spread this statewide."

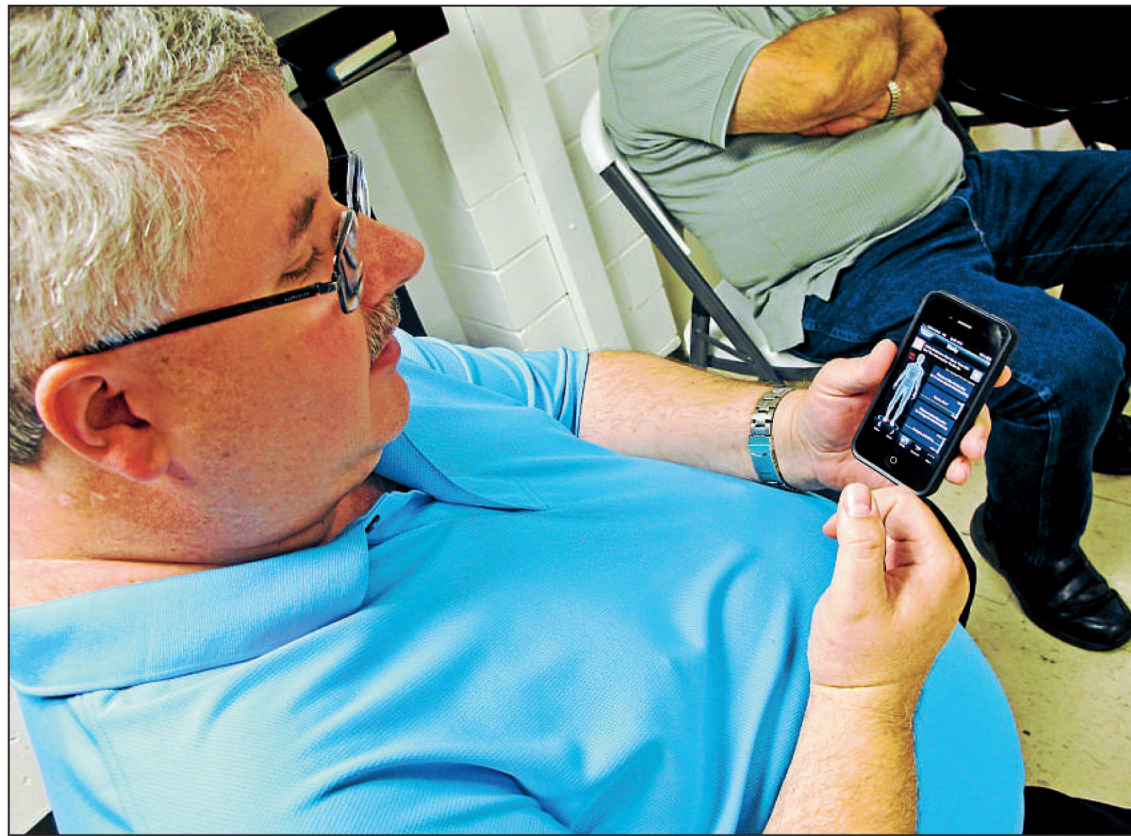
Here's how they do it

When it's too cold to walk outside, the Little Dove walkers do laps around the basement fellowship room instead. "Thirty-two times around is a mile," Thompson said.

"We aren't doing this so we can be good-looking," Pastor Maynard said. "We're doing it so we can feel better and see our grandkids grow up. Enjoy the life God gave us."

Surrounded by junk-food ads, with no gym, they're learning how to protect themselves anyhow.

A typical session: At about 6 p.m., they pull into the parking lot and drift inside in sweatshirts



"If every West Virginia church did what Little Dove is doing with just 10 people, that would be 30,000 people, all with better health. Think about that."

THE REV. JEFF ALLEN
West Virginia Council of Churches

and running shoes, hugging and weighing in, joking and checking blood pressures. "If you take those shoes off, you'll weigh less" somebody says. "I want you to look at how loose my pants are!" someone else says.

"Fellowship is the glue that holds it together," Pastor Maynard said. "We call it Fitness and Fellowship."

Mostly in their 50s and 60s, they pray and stretch, do knee bends, waist twists and leg lifts,

and then start walking.

Ninety-year-old Arva Reynolds troops along, her Lifeline Rescue button hanging around her neck. People like to tease her about the time she pushed the button to find out if it would work, and a bunch of firemen arrived at her house. "I just wanted to see if I could get me a man," she said, shrugging. Everyone laughed.

They walk after Wednesday night church, too. That's three nights a week. Most exercise on

their own, too.

Since May, they've shed several hundred pounds, collectively, and drastically lowered their blood pressure and sugar, fellowshiping and laughing all the way. "Others can see how well it's working," Pastor Maynard said. New people keep joining, he said, including some who don't attend Little Dove.

In the fall, a church member led them in the Arthritis Foundation's five-week "Walk with



KATE LONG | Sunday Gazette-Mail photos

ABOVE: Before they walk, participants stretch with exercises they got from the Arthritis Foundation, mixed with "whatever makes us feel good," said 90-year-old regular, Arva Reynolds (right).

LEFT: Jeff Reynolds measures his progress and calculates the calories he burns with his phone app.

Ease" stretching program. "We still use a lot of those exercises," Maynard said. They use others they got from Dr. Oz on TV. "It goes by quick when you have people to talk with!" Beulah Davis said.

"We fellowship before and after we walk," Maynard said. "Lots of nights, we'll be here another hour, telling stories, laughing, praying, trading recipes and Bible health trivia, solving problems."

"We trade healthy recipes we find on the Internet, or sometimes tell how we changed a recipe to make it healthier," he added.

"We try to apply what we've learned at church dinners. We bring healthier dishes, grilled chicken instead of fried, vegetable dishes, what have you. We're still Baptists, and Baptists like to eat, but we've got choic-

es at the dinners now."

"This has been good for the church. It's brought us all a lot closer," Thompson said. "We're taking care of each other. That makes you close."

"The fellowship keeps them coming back, the way they support and care for each other," Marcum said. If they had to exercise on their own, many probably wouldn't, she said.

"If people from another church want to do this, they should feel free to contact me," Pastor Maynard said.

The Little Dove program is taking a break for Christmas, he said, but come 2013, "We'll be walking again. This isn't a fad. It's lifestyle change."

Reach Kate Long
at katelong@wvgazette.com
or 304-348-1798.