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Orchard Market cashier takes Christ to England

By Grant Berry

For the past three years, Marci Lee has been working at Fruitport Orchard Market. In addition to the hours she puts in as a cashier, she has a heart for Christian service that took her to England on an extended mission trip in early 2011.

Marci had been searching for an opportunity to grow in faith and to share her love of Christ with others when she stumbled upon the international mission agency, Operation Mobilization (OM). OM specializes in designing short-term trips and internships for individuals, families, churches and groups. Marci was so impressed by the testimonials she read from others who had experienced the program that she decided to apply. She was quickly accepted. However, there was a problem — she was already registered for classes at Baker College where she is pursuing a degree in interior design.

Marci's parents are Mark and Laura Lee from Fruitport. Initially, they were skeptical of their daughter's ambitious undertaking. "I wasn't real sure about it at first," Laura admitted. "Marci didn't know anyone at OM, and I'd never heard of the organization, so I just didn't know. But I talked to someone at my church that had gone on a mission trip with them, and she had a lot of positive things to say about the program, so I felt better about it. It turned out to be a very good experience for Marci."

With the support of her family, Marci pulled herself out of school for the semester and began focusing on her trip to England. Originally, she planned to pay for the trip by herself with the money she makes at Orchard Market, but her family convinced her to write a letter seeking donations,

"My family was very supportive," she said. "They helped me raise money even though they wanted me to finish school first. But they knew this was what I really wanted to do, and I really felt that God wanted me to go on this trip. It wasn't something that just happened. All the pieces just fell into place."

Marci also sold pies for additional funds for her trip. "I was overwhelmed by the response from people who didn't even know me who sent donations," she said.

For the first three weeks, Marci stayed at the OM Training Center located in Halesowen. While there, she attended information sessions about English culture, evangelism, world religions, drama and many other topics. By the second week, they put their training into practice by flooding the streets of Halesowen with evangelism.

"It was such a stretching experience, and sad to find that the majority of people we approached knew nothing of the Gospel. It was difficult because we couldn't see

the fruit from the seeds we planted. We can only pray that others will come along and further that growth. We did see a couple of people come to Christ and that was amazing," she said.

After the first month, Marci was placed with a team and relocated to Warwick, England. Her team was made up of Denes from Hungary, Liane from Germany, Delia from Singapore, and Willemieke from the Netherlands, making Marci the only U.S. citizen. Even though her team was from all over the globe, Marci said, "We could all connect so well because of our connection to Christ."

Marci had been on many mission trips in the past sponsored by her church and youth group, but this one was different. "The other trips were safe and comfortable because I knew everyone," she said. "We provided a service for people and then shared the Gospel with them. On this trip, I didn't know anyone, and they were all from different countries. And the people we ministered to were just on the streets. We had to be bold, and for me that was scary."

After their initial training, Marci's team performed ministry for four weeks while continuing to study. The team would do a training session for a week

and then go out and apply what they learned. The outreach ministries that the team was involved with included free coffee and tea for the community of Warwick, free art instruction, discussion and snacks with teens, talking with people in pubs, praying for people in the



The OM team in England included (left to right) Willemieke, Liane, Marci, Delia and Denes.

open-air market, kayaking with people in the community, and games and conversation with senior citizens. They also distributed flyers door-to-door and passed out tracts in the market square.

"Each experience stretched and challenged my faith," she said. "And I did it with an amazing group of friends who continue to be a blessing to me every day."

Marci is now back to work at Orchard Market, but she stays in contact with her team through "snail mail" letters. "It's more practical that way," she said. "It's a good way to keep those relationships in Christ."

Marci hopes to do more "faith-based" mission trips in the future to help people grow in Christ or to help them with everyday needs. She is also considering changing her college major to something in the field of human services. "I've always had a need to help people," she said.

Until that time comes, Marci can be found behind the courtesy counter at Fruitport Orchard market with a friendly smile and a lively spirit, inspiring others and helping people with their groceries. •

I'm all ears

By Clif Martin

Here I go again, using the friendly FAN to pop off about ears that don't work right and the things we do to hear better. I was on my knees beside the bed this morning. No, it wasn't my morning prayers. I was trying to find my darn hearing aid. Those things are a pain in the brain and they cost too much.

The hearing aid industry has some pretty good answers to that common complaint about high cost. They remind us that a modern digital hearing aid is worth the price because it's a complex and marvelous instrument using the latest computer technology to do a wonderful job of processing sound.

They come up with another one that seems to make sense: Such a tiny percentage of people who need hearing aids actually buy them that the dealers must charge more per sale to make a decent profit.

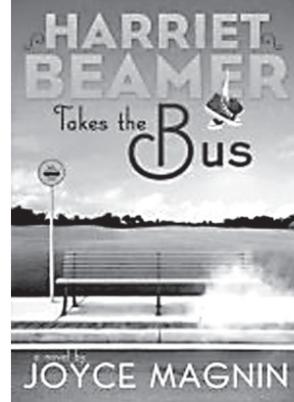
An optical shop sells so many pairs of glasses that they can make a smaller profit on each pair and still have a good bottom line. In my never-to-be humble opinion, hearing aid prices will come down when the world gets a new way of thinking about hearing loss and hearing aids, as we did about glasses. If I were in the business, I would need to advertise tiny, nearly invisible devices because we think hearing aids are for old people. Nobody wants to look old, so let's hide those things.

It wasn't that long ago eyeglasses were like that. Dorothy Parker, the great wit of the past century wrote, "Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses." Kids who wore them were called "four-eyes." Now we attend trunk showings of eyewear with famous name designer labels. We have done a big turn-around in our attitude. Will that happen about hearing aids? Will we have brightly colored designer ear wear? I've heard that it has started in California, where all the revolutionary ideas come from. I hope it makes its way to the great American mid-section. •

New book offers hilarious account of the aging process

By Pam Mettler

A new Christian book just published by Zondervan gives an hilarious account about one woman's travels through the lens of aging in *Harriet Beamer Takes the Bus* by Joyce Magnin.



The book introduces readers to the curious and quirky 72-year-old main character, Harriet. Upon losing a sucker's bet to her daughter-in-law, she agrees to sell her home and move from Pennsylvania to California to live with her son and his wife. She determines to do it "her way," by taking the bus to see a bit of the greater United States along the

way. However, she uses all forms of public transit to get there.

The book uses the theme of Beamer's taking the bus as a metaphor for the different routes and detours that people take on their life journeys.

One of the characters Beamer meets along the way echoes the mantra of many older Americans nowadays when she states; "I know you won't believe this, but you got me thinking that maybe I can do more than ride the bus to play the slots. Maybe I can do more with my life — even if I am over 70."

The book is available through Zondervan Publishing Company at www.zondervan.com or at a local bookseller. •