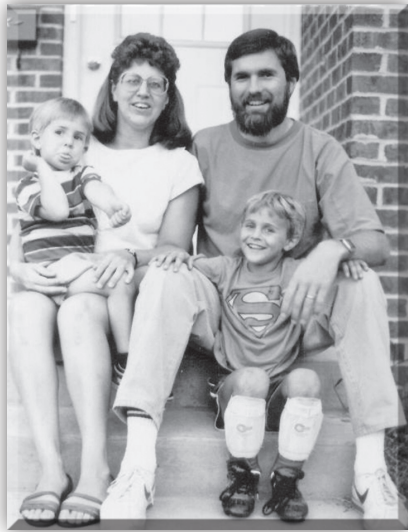


## An Ending: The Evansville MVS Unit Decommissioned *by Amy Rich*



*Patchwork's first VSers, the Hartzler family, arrived in 1988. Jay was the first director of Habitat of Evansville. Sherri worked in Patchwork's food pantry and helped organize Patchwork's tutoring program. (photo by Calvin Kimbrough)*

August 1 and 2 saw a unique and wonderful gathering of people at Patchwork. Old friends who moved away nearly 25 years ago, toddlers getting their first introduction to Patchwork, and many Patchwork regulars gathered in our big room for stories, laughter, music, photos, plenty of food, and some tears.

The occasion was the Decommissioning of Patchwork's Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) unit. The unit had been part of Patchwork since 1988. It was one household of many in MVS, a national network of similar units in other cities. MVS is a program run by the Mennonite Church that offers participants an opportunity to live out their faith through community service. Participants serve for 1-3 years and receive room and board in exchange for their work in community organizations. Unfortunately, the national MVS organization has seen significant declines in enrollment over the past several years, and in response the national staff decided to eliminate 10 of the 21 MVS units nationwide, including ours.

Over 27 years, 18 Mennonite Voluntary Service Workers (VSers) served in Evansville, giving over 46 years of service to the neighborhoods surrounding Patchwork. VSers participated in Patchwork worship services, they were present in our neighborhood (where the MVS unit was always located), and they worked for either Patchwork or one of our partners in the community. They contributed energy, ideas, imagination, and hard work.

They received opportunities for leadership and life lessons from Patchwork's Worship Community members, from their co-workers, and from the people whom they served. The entire Evansville community benefited in large and small ways: the Arts & Smarts children's snack time rituals, our volunteer record system, many of the art pieces around our building, Patchwork's tutoring program, Patchwork's work on bikes, the River City Food Co-op, and Patchwork's current leadership. After their service in Evansville, our VSers returned home to places like Kansas, Ohio, Oregon, Manitoba, and Colorado.

So it was with sadness that we gathered on August 2 for a worship service to Decommission our MVS unit.

There were songs from both the Patchwork Band and the Mennonite hymnal. Biff Weidman, the Mennonite who helped found the unit, read from the first book of the New Testament (Mathew 5:1-12) and Elizabeth Syre, the last VSer to arrive in Evansville, read from the last book of the New Testament (Revelation 21). The group shared memories and reflections on the Evansville MVS unit.

Nelia Kimbrough, who for many, many years was part of the group who provided leadership for the unit, led the Prayers of the People with words that included:



*Ten of the 18 individuals who served as VSers in Evansville were able to return for the Decommissioning Service.*

*continues on page 2*

## An Ending: The Evansville MVS Unit Decommissioned (con't)

*"We thank you for this place: a place of love, acceptance, a place of challenge, a place of laughter, a place of wonderful, abundant food, a place of art, growth, and healing. God, we give you thanks and praise for this particular moment when we lift up all the work of the Voluntary Service unit of the Patchwork Central Community. For all of the years of service that have been given, for all of these wonderful, beautiful, and talented young people who have come and been willing to do the work and who have been willing to go forth into the world to continue the work."*

Toward the end of the service, John Rich led the group in communion in which he likened the bread, broken and consumed by each person present, to the loaf that each Patchwork Community member receives as "bread for the journey" during the official leave-taking ceremony when members move away from Evansville. Communion was followed by a Litany of Decommissioning that John had written for the occasion. It ended with this passage:

Liturgist: We decommission the Evansville MVS Unit with both grief and gratitude.

**MVS Supporters: For all of the energetic lives that Evansville MVS brought to us,**

***For all of the loving relationships formed,  
For all of the new horizons of service opened to us,  
For all of the unexpected yet lavish gifts given us by  
the presence of Evansville MVS,  
We give thanks, O God.***

**Past MVSers: For all of the learning we learned here,**

***For all of the deep love we were showed here,  
For all of the growing we did while planted here,  
For all of the ways we brought Patchwork and Evansville  
MVS with us on our life journeys,  
We give thanks O God.***



A peace lamp was given to Patchwork Central by Mennonite Mission Network as a "reminder of our long history together, and an encouragement to continue to be a light in your community."

Liturgist: We look to the future, to God's future, and know that the Evansville MVS Unit is not dead, but will rise again in new and surprising ways. It will rise again in moments of service and song, in acts of mercy and justice, in organizations and programs that will not even know the debt they owe Evansville MVS, and in lives transformed that may not even understand the connection.

**Everyone: With hearts full of grief and gratitude and hope, we decommission the Evansville MVS Unit and dedicate its enduring spirit to continue the work of service, community, and justice throughout the world, in joy without end.**



Nelia Kimbrough leads the Prayers of the People during the Decommissioning Service.



The Patchwork Band plays during the Decommissioning Service.



## Summer Art Smarts

During June and July, children at Patchwork experienced another enriching summer of Arts & Smarts. Fifty-three children attended the six weeks of activities.

“This is better than TV!” declared one participant.

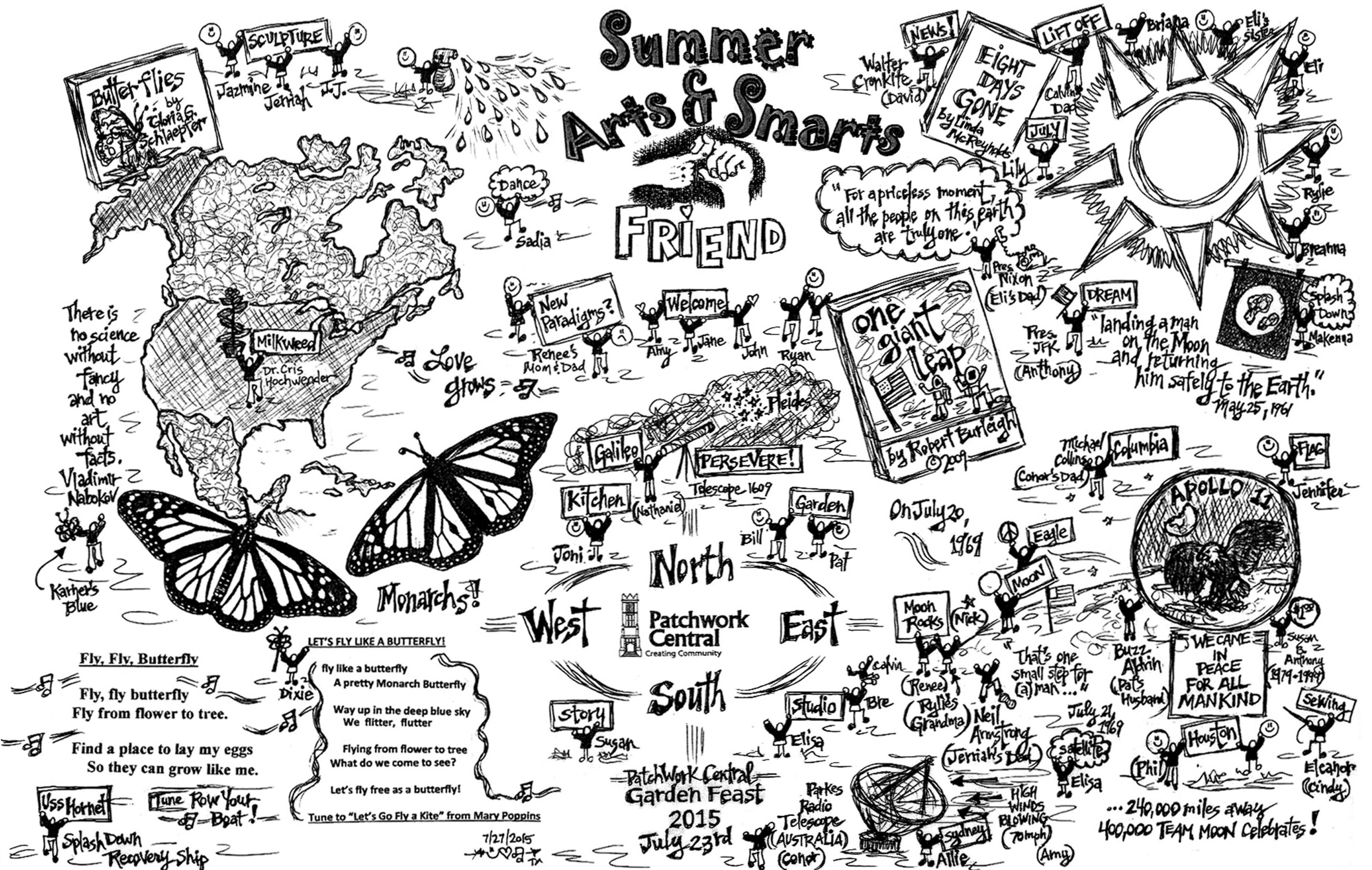
The themes for Art Garden Weeks I and II were butterflies and incredible journeys. Susan Fowler told about Monarch butterflies’ incredible migration from Mexico to Canada. She also told about the incredible journey that a water drop goes on as part of the water cycle and about the incredible journey that the astronauts went on during the first moon landing. Meanwhile, participants made ceramic butterflies and milkweed seed balls in the studio, they planted a new butterfly garden of native plants for butterflies to snack on, and they made nutritious food for themselves to snack on using produce from our garden.

In between the two Art Garden Weeks, participants got to experience sculpture by constructing fabric people using found objects with Amy Rich, they got to try dances from around the world with Sadia Brimm from the Children’s Center for Dance Education, they got to make a stop motion video about the summer with Elisa Pike, and they learned to cook and serve a fancy meal for their guests with Elisa.

The whole summer was a whirlwind of activities and people. It is best illustrated with Susan Fowler’s “Memory Sketches,” meant to help everyone remember the summer. One is included in this issue of *Stitches* to commemorate the Garden Feast that took place at the end of the summer with participants, volunteers, family, and friends.









## Back to School

On August 1, Patchwork held our annual Back to School Sale to help equip children for a successful school year. We sold 180 bags of school supplies tailored to grades K-5, over 300 pairs of underwear for boys and girls, over 200 pairs of socks, and four tables of assorted school supplies. Everything was brand new. The bags of school supplies were well-stocked with at least 17 different items—most of the items that a child would need for his or her grade level.

Unlike other Back to School giveaways around town, Patchwork charges parents a small fee for our supplies. This fee is a small percentage of the actual value of the supplies they receive. We hope that this gives parents an opportunity to show their children that they are invested in their schooling while making back-to-school time affordable for everyone. As one volunteer told me, “I do this because when I was little, my family didn’t have much money and I’d have to do without. I know having all the school supplies you need is important when the school year starts.”

Many thanks to the Back to School Committee, particularly Jane Johansen for her careful shopping throughout the year. Thanks, also, to the many volunteers who helped out, including Robyn Musgrave and the members of Simpson United Methodist Church who came for bagging and sale days and the Kohls employees who helped with the sale.

We’ve already begun planning and purchasing supplies for next year’s Back to School Sale. We welcome financial contributions toward the Sale and in kind donations of new socks and underwear. It is only with these gifts that we can continue this service to our community.



## Meditation Space

The meditation space at the center of our garden is new and improved, thanks to Alexander Scott and his Eagle Scout project. Alexander led a team of scouts to rebuild existing benches, to expand seating so the space will accommodate larger groups of children, and to rebuild the roof over our wood-fired bread oven. The improved space will be dedicated this fall, and the children in our Arts & Smarts program have used beads, found objects, and okra pods to create new “tree jewelry” to add some extra sparkle to the garden.

## Summer Dance Week *by Jane Vickers*

Thank you to our friends at the Children's Center for Dance Education who partnered with us again this summer to present Dance Week.

During Dance Week, Sadia Brimm led participants in four days of dancing around the world. Sadia is a favorite of all the kids who come. She is fun and engaging, and everyone has a good time when she is around. There was Spanish dancing with castanets, fans, and pirate hats with large feathers. We did African dance with drums and cool African cloth for costumes. We did ballet, tap, and hip hop. There was even an old-school Soul Train dance line that was so much fun one of the dads got involved and had everyone doing the robot. Looking back, I think my favorite part of Dance Week was that everyone had a wonderful time dancing and jumping and running regardless of what their skill level was.



### E-newsletter

#### More Stories! More Photos! More News!

Sign up for our bi-weekly e-newsletter! You will receive email updates highlighting the most recent happenings at Patchwork.

Simply visit our website, [www.patchwork.org](http://www.patchwork.org), and click the "join our mailing list" link!

### Bequests

The next time you update your will, please consider adding Patchwork Central, Inc. as a beneficiary. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Patchwork is eligible to receive donations from bequests. Any size of gift makes a big difference in providing for our programming and contributing to our long-term stability.

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

*The Patchwork Community meets for worship  
every Sunday at 5:15 p.m.*

*at the Meetinghouse,  
100 Washington Avenue,  
followed by a covered dish supper.  
All are welcome!*

## Patchwork Central, Inc.

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*Please be generous as you consider  
sending your cash contribution in the  
envelope provided for your convenience.  
Your generosity will help us continue the  
Patchwork tradition of providing these many  
creative programs.*

### PATCHWORK'S MISSION STATEMENT

Based in Evansville, Indiana, Patchwork Central, Inc creates community and encourages spiritual and social growth

by offering hospitality,  
by providing opportunities for learning,  
by fostering creativity and involvement in the arts, and  
by working toward a more peaceful and just world.

Regional Arts Partner



This activity made possible by the Vanderburgh Community Foundation, the Indiana Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



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