

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

September 2006
Vol. 16, No. 11

VMBM, Mission Network formalize mission connections

An agreement signed during a meeting July 9 between Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and Mennonite Mission Network ensures continuing cooperation between the two mission agencies.

From VMBM and Mission Network, leaders Loren Horst and Stanley Green and board chairs Phyllis Miller and Lee Schmucker signed protocol agreements approved by the boards of the respective institutions.

The protocols commit the two agencies to continuing collaboration both in the United States and abroad that advances the work of the larger Mennonite/Anabaptist mission community and benefits both U.S. and global churches. While the two agencies have a common foundation, they sometimes differ in policy, strategy and priorities. Leaders said the protocol agreements honor and respect those differences while acknowledging common vision and strategies.

Green, executive director/chief executive officer of Mennonite Mission Network, and Horst, VMBM president, said the signing shows that the agencies take seriously their common mission and their unity in Christ.

Mennonite Mission Network has protocols for collaboration with Mennonite Church Canada Witness, Eastern Mennonite Missions and Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. Green said these protocols provide a “practical reality that allows anyone in the U.S. and Canada, wherever they are located, to have access to mission opportunities in every part of the world that God loves.”

“We welcome this opportunity to build stronger collaborations among North American mission agencies and the global church,” Horst said.

The two agencies share common goals, including:

- Encouraging emerging churches indigenous to their cultures;



Phyllis Miller, VMBM board chair, Loren Horst, VMBM president, Stanley Green, Mennonite Mission Network executive director/CEO, and Lee Schmucker, Mennonite Mission Network board chair, sign protocol agreements between Mission Network and VMBM during meetings July 7-10 in Harrisonburg. (Photo by Wayne Gehman, Mission Network)

- Serving the church by facilitating congregational mission capacity and offering leadership for mission;
- Bringing the whole gospel of Christ to a broken world;
- Sharing an Anabaptist perspective through holding evangelism, service and peace together in witness;
- Understanding mission as belonging to God and rooted in God’s love.

VMBM is the regional mission agency of Virginia Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Mission Network is the churchwide mission agency of Mennonite Church USA. Both welcome this opportunity to continue to strengthen the working relationships of mission agencies across North America and around the globe. The two agencies jointly support workers in Colombia, England, Israel, Lithuania and North America.

- Mennonite Mission Network and VMBM staff

Walking together

We've enjoyed another Conference Assembly and life is returning, more or less, to normal. A component of this Assembly that we anticipated and enjoyed immensely was the larger group of fraternal delegates from our global partner churches. We heard strong affirmation for the new and renewed friends among us. We heard strong affirmation for the way guests were more fully integrated into all levels of the conference than ever before. They helped plan, preached, provided music, helped in workshops, shared testimonies, and participated in discussions during delegate sessions. We learned from them and all were blessed.



Loren Horst
President of VMBM

From our guests, we heard many things. They felt a warm welcome here among people who seemed to know something about them because of our long-standing relationships. They learned from us too. They commented on the important nature of the church spanning people, cultural, language, and national boundaries. Some even suggested that we must continue to explore ways to strengthen conference-to-conference relationship on a global level. What would that mean for Virginia Mennonite Conference?

It can mean that opportunities for interchange increase. One Virginia delegate noted that there might be benefit in a joint conference meeting with a global partner, say, Jamaica Mennonite Conference. A fraternal delegate suggested that mutual benefit may be received by working on many issues together

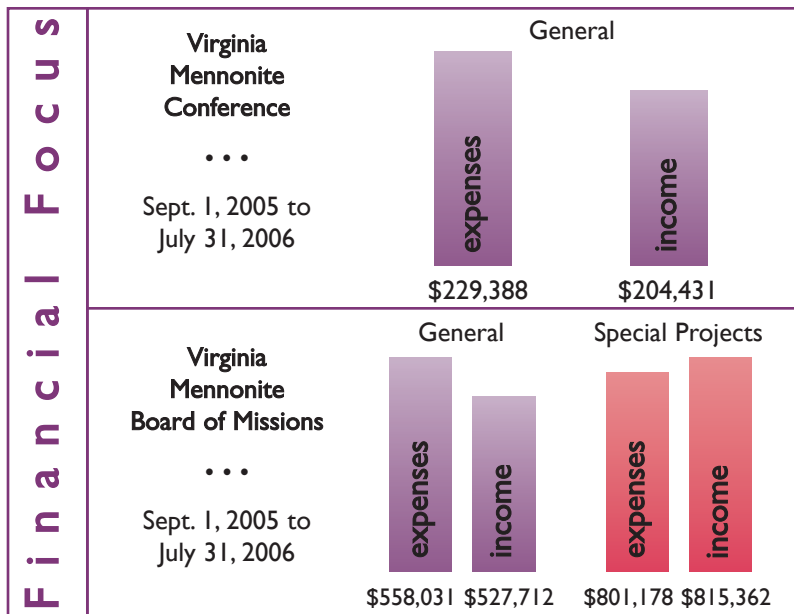
rather than apart. He noted that helper and helping relationships will flow both ways.

It can mean that hardly any Virginia Conference congregation exists without some meaningful and mutually beneficial relationship with congregations and believers in another part of the world. "Missional" language will not be limited to either local mission or to overseas mission alone. We will view the whole of God's world and God's creation as the work of His redemption, including ourselves.

It can mean that Virginia Mennonite Conference is learning better how to integrate persons and congregations within our own Conference from diverse people groups.

As a Conference, we believe there is mutual benefit and God is honored by walking together. The bridges among us are enjoyable, but even more, they increase the capacity of the church to obey Jesus' command to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. This annual Conference Assembly actually gave us some glimpses of just how exciting that journey can become.

Loren Horst



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H.S. Peacemaker Prize

Northern Virginia Mennonite Church (Fairfax), Herndon Friends Meeting (Quakers), and Dranesville Church of the Brethren joined together and created a “High School Peacemaker Prize,” inspired by Herndon Quaker Margaret Rogers’ idea of how to promote peace in the community and to recognize youth working for peace.

The six-person team (two persons from each congregation) evaluated the applicants and selected a winner, who received a modest monetary “scholarship” and a plaque.

The peace prize winner, Harrison Miller, has been active in a wide variety of peace projects. He led a group of friends in a community-building project by recording over 100 books for use by an elementary school English as a Second Language (ESL) program. In his essay, Harrison described important lessons he learned in personal peacemaking by struggling to forgive someone who assaulted a family member. For several years Miller has been a camp counselor for kids with emotional disabilities and hyperactivity, teaching them methods for dealing with their anger and frustration. Harrison will be attending Bridgewater (Va.) College, which is affiliated with the Church of the Brethren.

Harrison believes forgiveness is key to peacemaking and community-building. “I think these types of decisions are critical for anyone to make a peaceful difference in this world,” Harrison wrote in his essay.

Hoyt Maulden, member of Northern Va. Mennonite Church and member of the selection team, presented the award to Harrison Miller during the HHS year-end awards assembly. Hoyt says, “I was allotted two minutes to speak at the awards assembly and used about 30 seconds to talk about different acts that students are doing which they may not recognize as working for peace.”

Hoyt says, “We hope we can enlarge the prize next year, expand to new schools, and encourage other Mennonite churches in Virginia to pick up on this. I hope to produce a peacemaker prize “start-up kit” and make it available through the Peace Committee of Virginia Mennonite Conference. If anyone is interested, they can contact me through my church.”

• Reed Miller and Hoyt Maulden
Northern Virginia Mennonite Church, Fairfax, Va.
nvmc1@juno.com

Conversation turns to action with Deaf Youth Fellowship

It all started with a birthday party. In November 2005, our son, Mynor, invited six classmates from the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind to a weekend sleepover for his 13th Birthday. That Sunday we took the boys with us to Springdale Mennonite Church. To our surprise, they enjoyed it very much and asked to come back! Since they are dorm students and live throughout the state of Virginia, coming to Waynesboro every Sunday was not feasible. We, therefore, invited them to the Wednesday evening JMYF meetings.

For three months, one to eight deaf youth joined our hearing youth group. It quickly became evident that this was not meeting the spiritual needs of these deaf teens. The youth at Springdale have “grown up” in the church and are being disciplined in the faith.

These deaf youth had not been exposed to church and were in need of evangelism. They had never been told God’s story.

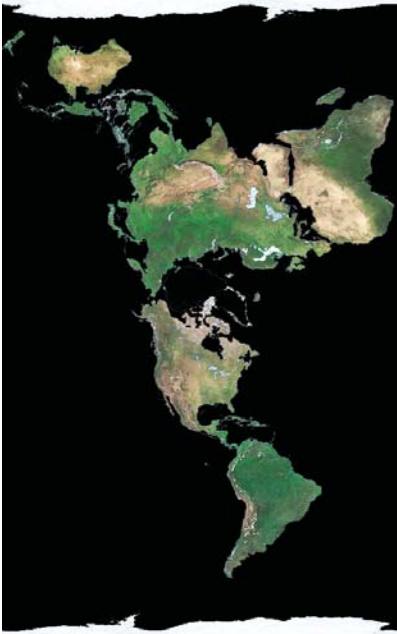
In mid-February, we had dinner with some friends who shared with us their longing to start a deaf ministry for the youth at VSDB. Our conversation quickly turned to action. On March 1, 2006, we started Deaf Youth Fellowship. We meet on Wednesday evenings during the school year for fellowship, activities, and storytelling in American sign language by a deaf leader. The group has grown to 29 youth at our last meeting. It is incredible how some of the youth have already come to understand that they are a part of God’s amazing story. Several have made commitments to Christ and are eager to learn more about the Gospel.

In July, seven of the youth joined Springdale for our weekend at Highland Retreat. During a moving service on Sunday morning our son and a deaf friend were among seven baptized in the creek! Mynor’s testimony included a longing that he has for the future—to start a deaf church in Staunton, Va. Please join us in praying for this ministry. If you would like to get involved, in any way, we would be delighted!

• Chris and MaryBeth Heatwole Moore
Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.
heatwolemoore@adelphia.net



Deaf youth gather to hear the Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection shared by Harry Wood, deaf leader, after enjoying an ice cream social.



Sent! Around the World

New Perspectives on Mission

Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly 2006

(at right) **Loren Horst** (r) thanks **Marvin Slabaugh** for his 12 years of service on the board of Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. Marvin is retiring from the board at the end of his term this year.



What a glorious time we had! Many of you were present and drew inspiration from a wonderful Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC) Assembly held at Eastern Mennonite University, July 6-9, 2006. The theme helped focus us on both missions and evangelism. World Neighbors Missions Festival opened the Assembly with an opportunity to meet people and taste delicious foods.

Several things made this Assembly particularly memorable. Perhaps the most significant was the presence of dozens of international guests from Italy, Albania, Jamaica and Trinidad, all regions where Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions (VMBM) is active.

These international brothers and sisters were fully integrated into the program. Ramesh Jaimani, president of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago, preached on the opening night while Ganesh and Risha Kalloo from Trinidad, he a student at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and she a teacher at EMU, helped plan and lead worship. Many international guests, and the pastor of a Hispanic congregation which meets at Ridgeway Mennonite Church, served communion during Saturday's service.



(above) **Earlene Horst**, **Melodie Stutzman**, and **Babes Jaimani** serve Trinidadian food at the Trinidad and Tobago display at **World Neighbors Missions Festival**, held Thursday afternoon.

(right) **June Lantz** shows **Arvin Jaimani**, from Trinidad, the way to use chopsticks at the World Neighbors China display.



(left) Delegates discuss agenda around tables. At left are **Andon** and **Angelina Rrapokushi**, guests from Albania, seated with **Clyde Kratz** and **Wayne North**.

(right) **Art McPhee** leads a Bible study after one of the delegate sessions.



Attendance at the three evening worship services was approximately 300 people each night, and nearly 1,200 attended the joint Sunday morning service when Art McPhee, from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, delivered the culminating address “The Work Prepared for Us.”

After the Sunday morning worship service ended, about 120 people gathered in the EMU Snack Shop to watch Italy defeat France in the World Cup, seen on a big screen. It was great to see long-time VMBM mission worker Willard Eberly exult in his adopted nation’s victory!

Through it all God was present and we were challenged to carry the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, to the entire world.

Next year the VMC Assembly will be hosted by the Tennessee-Carolina-Kentucky District at Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory, N.C., July 26-28, 2007. See you there!

- Steve Carpenter
Conference Coordinator

Note: the text of Art McPhee’s sermon is available by emailing sherah-leigh.gerber@vmconf.org



(left) **Amanda Swartley** (standing) organized the children’s activities at Assembly. The kids went to the Harrisonburg Children’s Museum and a community swimming pool among other activities.

(above) **Klotilda Stojani**, from Albania, (center right) spoke to the youth and was involved in games and fun activities.



(above) From left, **Ina Arena**, **Madila (Arena) Donato**, **Franco Arena**, and **Massimo Donato**, all from Palermo, Italy, sang in Italian for the gathering music before worship Friday evening. In front, a doll represents Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va.



(above) **Ron Friesen** leads a workshop on “Sharing Jesus Without Force, Fear or Failure.”



(above) **Elaine Baker**, from Kingston, Jamaica, **Deb Pardini**, president of Mennonite Women of Virginia, and **Risha Kalloo**, from Curepe, Trinidad, at the Mennonite Women’s Breakfast on Saturday morning. Risha was the speaker.



(left) **Ross Erb** reads a children’s story during Sunday morning worship. He read a story that related to the theme at each of the worship services.

(below) Nearly 1,200 people gathered for Sunday morning worship in the EMU Commons.

(right) **Kimberlee Greenawalt**, Conference Youth Minister, says farewell after eight years in her role. **Beryl Jantzi**, Conference Moderator, and **Steve Brown**, Assistant Moderator, look on.



Highland's holistic approach to understanding

"Here they come across the field." I heard Dean say over the base station radio in the office. A few moments later his voice came through again. "Everyone is here. They're all accounted for." It was a hot day in July and several cabin groups were hiking back from one of their favorite picnic areas known as "Blue Hole." No one expected they would get caught in a drenching downpour.

Such experiences make camp directors a bit nervous. After all, getting caught in a thunderstorm too far away from camp could have negative consequences. But getting soaked in the rain on a hot day can be as exhilarating as a swim in the pool or a ride down the zip line.

I recently bought a new book, Last Child in the Woods - Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder written by Richard Louv. The premise of the book is with the advent of increasing technology our kids are so "plugged in," and their interaction with nature so limited, that they are experiencing adverse physical and social consequences.

I can't wait to finish the book but I couldn't help thinking how fortunate parents and churches here in the Valley are to have places like Highland Retreat and other camps, to help temper the negative effects of our wired (but going wireless) culture. In what other setting can you get so much packed into one program?

- A nature program that not only teaches good stewardship of the environment but introduces kids to the One who created it all.
- A Bible program that not only teaches spiritual truths but introduces kids to the One who said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."
- A daily living program that teaches kids the very basics of cooking their own meals (over a fire) but also teaches them good habits and



Highland counselor Baeda Agonefer shows camper Ian Barnhart, from Bethesda, Md., how to make a stick boat to float down the stream.

how to clean up and wash their dishes.

- Counselors that are not only concerned about safety and showing kids a good time but who have strong faith and moral character, making them good role models as well.
- Activities that are challenging, stimulating and fun but at the same time comply with carefully thought-out safety guidelines.
- An outdoor setting that has a variety of wildlife and natural habitats next to a national forest, that not only teach life lessons but also inspire kids to listen to the voice of God.

We have truly been blessed by men and women who had the vision and commitment to develop this place where kids can experience such a holistic approach guiding their understanding of and acceptance of the Good News.

• Paul Beiler
Executive Director, Highland Retreat

called and sent!

Contact Beth Brunk at (800) 707-5535 or beth.brunk@vmbm.org

Will you serve in Albania?

Church Development/Leadership Trainer Couple - Lushnje, Albania - Albania Mennonite Mission has invested in agricultural and church development work in Lushnje and the outlying villages since 1996. Much of the work has focused on agricultural development and three small fellowships have emerged (Lushnje, Goricaj, and Kemishtaj). With no long-term personnel currently in Lushnje under EMM or VMBM, some of these groups have dwindled down to a small Bible study. There is an urgent need for a couple with gifts, experience and vision for church development, especially in the area of discipleship and leadership training, to live in Lushnje and nurture the small clusters of existing believers in this area. Through the agricultural development work there are many open doors in the communities but there is a need for workers to nurture these relationships and raise up local leaders.

University Ministry/Fellowship Formation - Tirana, Albania - Ever since entering this country, the Albania Mennonite Mission has wondered when the time would come to place long-term personnel in the capital city of Tirana. With the exodus to the cities, particularly of young adults seeking further education, and the fact that 1/3rd of the population of Albania now lives in the greater Tirana area, it seems like it is time to place a long-term couple in this city. The focus of this work will center on outreach to university students in Tirana, especially those from the Mennonite Churches in Lezhe and Lushnje, with a goal of forming small fellowships/churches in the city. In addition there will be some exploration of utilizing these connections for a discipleship center/Anabaptist center where young believers can be further disciplined and trained in the ways of Jesus. This new initiative may result in the need for additional personnel to be sent to develop this vision.

Connections Prayer Calendar September 2006

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by
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"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' — John 11:25-26 (NIV)

*If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, please contact
 Gloria Lehman at (540) 434-9727 or gloria.lehman@vmbm.org.*

3 Skip and Carol Tobin's daughters are getting settled into the school year; some have traveled far from their parental home. Ask for God's presence as they adjust to studying. The Tobins are VMBM/EMM workers in Thailand.

4 Pray for several middle-aged adults who are preparing for believers baptism at the Centro Koinonia congregation that will take place in early October.

5 Willard and Eva Eberly will be returning to Italy today and tomorrow following two months in Virginia. Pray for safety in travel and adjustments to life and ministries in Italy.

6 Praise God that a foundation of planning and prayer is now taking place in Eastern Virginia for the planting of a new church. Congregations in Eastern and Calvary Districts are combining their finances and support for this.

7 Is your congregation's Penny Power jug filling up? One congregation has brought their money and it is almost \$1000! Keep on collecting coins until October 7 when the jugs are brought to the Va. Relief Sale.

10 Invite a blessing for Michael & Peggy Shenk as the Northern District churches gather to honor their retirement. Pray a blessing on Clyde Kratz, newly appointed as partner overseer with Sam Weaver.

11 Shirley Roth, VMBM and Network worker in Nazareth Village, Israel, directs the daily activities at the Village. Tourists come to the Village and receive a clear message that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Pray for peace in that land.

12 During Latino Heritage Month, ask God to work through the leaders of the Latino Student Alliance to build meaningful cross-cultural relationships at Eastern Mennonite University.

13 Pray for Sonya Harmish who returned to Albania for another term of service. Pray as she adjusts to living in Tirana and to a new role as assistant at the AEP office, which serves to coordinate the Albanian evangelical mission agencies.

14 Pray for VMC's new Treasurer Jeff Souder and the Finance Committee as they meet tomorrow to review VMC's financial position.

1 Pray for the freshman class of Eastern Mennonite High School. Pray that they may establish a sense of unity and care for one another as they spend a day in bonding activities.

8 Thank our giving God for many generous donors for their contributions to VMBM and VMC as a result of our phone-a-thon this summer. The work of the Lord goes on because of your help!

15 Please pray for the Faith and Life Commission as they meet today with their newly appointed chair, Joe Longacher.

16 Pray for the leaders and congregation of Williamsburg Mennonite Church as they celebrate their 30th anniversary tomorrow. Ask God to continue to bless their ministry.

17 The Hispanic population in the Harrisonburg area is 7,000 to 10,000. Thank God for two area Hispanic groups meeting in Mennonite churches, and the churches' outreach into this growing community.

18 Another school year has started for Nancy Marshall, deaf educator in Orange Walk Town, Belize. Her creativity enhances learning for her students. May they also see the love of Christ in her each day.

19 Pray for staff persons and local T/C/K district leaders who will gather tomorrow at Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory, N.C. to begin Assembly planning for 2007.

20 Pray for the Centro Koinonia team as they plan a monthly Giorno Felice (Happy Day) so that the children will continue to come to church for learning and fun. Phil and Marcia Lehman are involved with this outreach.

21 Conference Council will meet tomorrow for the first time in the new fiscal year. Pray that they may have wisdom as together they discern new directions for VMC.

22 Pray for grace and discernment as Conference Council meets today and tomorrow to guide VMC future ministries.

23 As we send workers abroad to witness and lead people to Christ, may each of our Virginia Conference congregations have a vision to strengthen its outreach to our neighbors, and serve them both in word and deed.

24 Pray for Fred Gibson, as he shares faith building stories during Spiritual Renewal Week at Eastern Mennonite School, that the students' faith would be deepened.

25 Paolo Campos from the Brazilian Mennonite Mission Committee will visit Albania this week for the first time. Pray for his safety in travel and for meetings with Norma Teles and Willard and Eva Eberly.

26 Pray for overseer Roy Hange as he guides worship and reflection during Spiritual Life Week at Eastern Mennonite Seminary this week.

27 Pray for Mark Wenger, instructor at the Preaching Institute, and the participants as they begin this year of learning and growing together.

28 Pray for the special celebration/festival to be held by VMBM/EMM in Lushnje, Albania, this week to honor the some 45 families/individuals who have paid off their micro-credit loans. Pray that this will foster good will and encourage economic development.

29 Pray for VMC's new Interim Conference Youth Minister as the annual weekend Jr. High Retreat begins at Smith Mt. Lake today.

30 Pray for blessing, rest, and refreshment as Conference Minister Owen & Ruth Ann Burkholder begin a sabbatical month tomorrow.

Announcements

Come to the **Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale**, Oct. 6-7, 2006, at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds. Enjoy auctions, booths, great food and fun, all while supporting the work of Mennonite Central Committee.

You are invited to a **Celebration of Ministry** banquet honoring the late Bishop Leslie



Francisco II (1929-1992) and Naomi (Rowe Taylor) Francisco, at the Point Plaza Suites and Conference Hotel in Newport News, Va., Saturday, September 9, 2006

at 5 p.m. These anointed leaders were instrumental in the start and growth of Calvary Community Church. Their son, Leslie W. III and his wife, Natalie A. Francisco, now lead that dynamic ministry. Please respond by Tuesday, September 5 at 800-707-5535 or 540-434-9727 or email laura.moyers@vmbm.org. Space is limited.

2006 Penny Power



We are hoping to raise \$22,000 for this year's *Penny Power* projects. In 2005, congregations contributed **\$22,834.09!** We hope to continue the effort and momentum from last year.

- Collect jugs for your church from the Conference Center, 901 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg.
- Highlight *Penny Power* during your Sunday morning worship service. Involve the children in your church. Ask for a DVD of Nancy Marshall's deaf ministry from VMBM.
- Contact Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions at 540-434-9727, 800-707-5535, or info@vmbm.org.

Service Transition



Shirley Roth is serving as director of Nazareth Village, Israel, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network and Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. She is from

Madison, Wis., and was formerly a member of Northern Virginia Mennonite Church, Fairfax, Va.

Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions is seeking a person to serve as a full-time Development Director. This individual will provide leadership for the fundraising efforts of the mission program and serve as an advocate for mission in Virginia Conference. Experience in areas of finance, broad familiarity with the Mennonite Church, and good relational skills are required. Position is available immediately. Contact Lois Maust at (540) 434-9727 for an application and position description. Please submit resumes and applications by September 29, 2006.

Join the annual Bike Shenandoah 2006 Saturday, September 23, 2006

Begins and ends at Eastern Mennonite School
801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Registration information:
www.bikeshenandoah.org

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