

Ten Thousand Villages Report

February 2023 - Joel Weidner

The Ten Thousand Villages store is facing critical financial challenges, and the board will need to make some decisions in the next month regarding the non-profit's future.

The store opened in the fall of 2018 and expanded in the fall of 2021. We survived the COVID pandemic with the assistance of government funding but are now facing an uncertain financial future. We have also received notice that our executive director, Kieran Holland, will be leaving this spring for another job.

The board is creating a plan to reduce costs, but we also need to figure out how to increase sales revenue which has lagged since 2021. Kieran's leaving presents challenges as well as an opportunity to staff the store differently and save on payroll costs.

International Volunteer Exchange Program

We have applied to the Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP). The program would bring an international volunteer to State College to work in the store. If we do receive a volunteer we would need to identify a host family for the individual.

The program runs from mid-August until mid-July the following year. If we are accepted to receive a volunteer, we would need to provide a host family. Some of the information for host families is below.

Hosts should be:

- Active in their church community
- Open to learning from others
- Willing to share their lives with the IVEP participant
- Intentional about checking in with the IVEP participant, just like you would with your own family members.
- Able to provide IVEP participants with their own bedroom.

MCC hopes that the IVEP participant will become part of the family, not just a tenant or boarder. We ask that you include the IVEP participant in your life just like a family member. We encourage you to go together to local attractions, sports or community events, cultural activities or fairs.

IVEP participants and their hosts are supported by both regional and national coordinators throughout the year. They are in regular contact to celebrate joys, help with challenges and give suggestions as needed. During the year IVEP participants attend three, weeklong meetings with MCC: orientation, mid-year conference and year-end conference in addition to several weekend regional retreats. Hosts receive a monthly stipend to be used to cover some of the cost for room and board for the IVEP participant. Hosts would also be responsible for helping the participant get to and from the work location (so in our case, something relatively close to the store would be ideal – or where public transportation would be an option).

Other Volunteers - We are also looking for individuals that would be willing to work a 4-hour shift each week or every-other week, independently operating the store for an opening or closing shift. Training would be provided.

Financial Support – Ten Thousand Villages appreciates the financial support provided through UMC and from individuals in the UMC community. We could not operate without that support.

