

CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

February 2024



Uncommon Thread | Steve Pausch

Youth For Christ, like many non-profit organizations, relies heavily on volunteer help to stretch the limited dollars and magnify the impact of the organization. We are incredibly blessed to have a team of adults that is committed to seeing young people find Jesus and grow in the knowledge of Him.

We have a vast array of people who give of their time and energy to see that young people are presented an opportunity to trust Jesus. These committed adults work together toward that common goal even though they are from differing backgrounds. Our teams are made up of current or retired educators, pastors, electricians, nurses, business people and the like. We have leaders from many different churches and denominations who all share a love and concern for the eternal health of teens. I often feel it is a **snapshot of heaven** to see so many followers of Jesus together in our centers following a common thread... the call of the Lord. From 1Corinthians 14: 14-19

One Body with Many Members

14For the body does not consist of one member but of many. **15**If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **16**And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **17**If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? **18**But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19**If all were a single member, where would the body be? **20**As it is, there are many parts,^e yet one body.

This work with teens can at times be a disappointing one when we see teens fall into things that are trouble. Many of our leaders who serve in the Sandusky County Juvenile Detention Center will drive to the allotted time of ministry and teens are on lockdown and not allowed to leave their cells or for whatever reason no one chooses to come out for our ministry time. Teens are very willing to agree to get together with leaders after their time in detention and even communicate that many times, but very seldom do teens follow up with that once back outside. I am very thankful for the faithfulness of our leaders not only in the detention center ministry but also in our ministry areas. Teens are often willing to agree to attend church with a staff member but less likely to show up. Many times we see great progress with a teen who is seeking the Lord, but then they are not around for a time, and then we hear a reason why they haven't been back. But I guess that is not very different from adults in the church.

Please pray for our adult leaders who give so much of themselves to this ministry and for the kids they serve. Next month we begin a section introducing you to some of our adult leaders.

Painful Growth | Matt Mountjoy

“For at the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” – Hebrews 12:11

Most people who knew me growing up would definitely not define me as “the rule follower”. While I wasn’t a “bad kid” by any stretch of the imagination, I also certainly wasn’t one to avoid bending rules and occasionally outright breaking them. I would have done so more without parents who cared enough to discipline me and keep me from going down a bad path. All of this is why it’s sometimes funny to me that I’m now the “rules guy” at The Garage. I’m responsible for keeping it a safe place where kids can be comfortable and grow. To be honest, it can be really frustrating at times because my nature is the exact opposite of “rules guy.” But what I have learned is God’s order comes to truly give us freedom through discipline. I’d much rather worry about having fun than needing to enforce a bunch of rules. It’s tempting to roll my eyes at seemingly silly sounding rules like “once you leave the property you can’t come back” or some you shouldn’t have to state like: “only one person in the bathroom at a time.” What I’ve noticed over the years, though, is that while there is often grumbling or pushback when a rule is put in place, and you might even see a few kids decide they don’t want to be around, the end result is generally growth in productive time with the kids who are there. Eventually, it leads to numbers growth, and ultimately ends up allowing the overall night to be more fun when you aren’t worried about distractions.

It seems so simple when you think about it since it is in fact God’s design! However, in practice

it still isn't all that fun to enforce. As I've written before and requested prayer for over the past year, we have a young and to put it mildly "rambunctious" group. This has led to me having to be the bad guy more than usual. This came into place recently when I noticed in short sequence several guys go in and out of the bathroom. While I'm sure they thought they were being quite tricky, it was pretty easy for me to figure out that they had hidden a vape in the bathroom. I found it and needed to send some of them home. It was really not fun. And even worse, one of the kids I had to send home was new, and I really tried to explain how much I wanted him to come back! If I had I decided it would just be easier to not be the bad guy and ignore it, I would have missed the mark on God's direction showing that discipline is an act of love. We also ended up having a really great night with those who were left, and we didn't have to worry about distractions of kids misbehaving.

I don't write this newsletter to give an example of how hard things can be, or that the youth today are such bad kids. In fact, the more I reflected on that night, the more I began to evaluate the growth that has occurred throughout the year with the kids as a whole. While this event happened recently, it had actually been quite awhile since we had to send anyone home. Our numbers have been pretty consistent and we have been meeting new kids regularly, and we've had a lot of active participation on a week to week basis. In a year that's seen me and the other leaders need to be more strict, I can honestly say I've seen a ton of growth in the kids! Please continue to pray for the ministry and that these kids who really don't have a lot of structure and discipline at home can benefit from it coming from a place of love, and that they continue to come back and grow and hear truth!

Community | Laurie Beal

One of our goals as we minister to teenagers at The Garage, our Wadsworth Youth for Christ site, is to instill a sense of community. Community is something that many people of all ages are lacking, yet it is so important. We were created with a desire and need for community.

From a biblical perspective, we are instructed to love God and love others- Matthew 22: 26-39 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and all your mind. This is the great and the first commandment. And a second is like it. You should love your neighbor as yourself."

Mental health studies and books on mental health always conclude that community is vital to our mental health. When experts list ways to battle depression and anxiety, helping others is always on the list, for good reason. We were created with that need woven tightly into our DNA!

We weave this importance of community into our lessons and the challenges we give the kids and into our activities that we call "project impact"... basically making a positive impact on the world around us.

Many teens have been led to believe that community service is something you are required to do when you get in trouble. A punishment. I consider it a blessing to teach young people that it is actually a BLESSING to volunteer, and I love to watch the JOY that comes to them as they learn this truth and embrace it.

We recently made supply bags to be passed out to homeless folks in Wooster. It was neat watching the excitement of the teens as they decided what to write in the personal notes they were including in the blessing bags and to hear the empathy and compassion in their voices as they discussed how hard it must be to be homeless and just how much we take for granted.

Then, a few weeks later, a gal who hasn't been able to come to many Thursday nights due to extracurricular activities at school said ... "hey, we haven't done a project impact activity for a while. I miss those!" After she was filled in that we had been doing things, but she missed the last couple. I asked her to help come up with an idea. She immediately said cooking. So, the next week, after a message on mental health, the need for community and how God placed more than one of us on this planet for a good reason, we made four meals that could be frozen and pulled out on hard days. We made these meals for our dear staff member and friend who is battling cancer.



The teens loved the food prep, the teamwork involved and learned a lot. Surprising to me, many had not ever prepared a meal before. I guess home economics is an elective now?! Can opening and cutting vegetables were just a couple of things they hadn't learned yet. But they got to experience the joy of making life easier for someone and the empowering feeling of accomplishing something new. Thanks to ALL of you who support us and make these life lessons possible! We are glad YOU are part of our community!

**YOUTH
FOR CHRIST**
P.O. Box 323
Wadsworth, OH 44282
330-273-5794
www.northernohioyfc.com

Steve Pausch
Executive Director

Laurie Beal
Director of Ministry-
Wadsworth

Barb Pfeiffer
Office Manager

Local Ministry Directors:

Scott Hulet
Herb Miller
Matt Mountjoy
Roger Seward
Stacey Stender

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