

CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

January 2022



Youth for Christ Goal..... 1 Million Teenagers | Steve Pausch

YFC of Northern Ohio is a part of a worldwide organization that has been reaching out to young people since 1944. As we start the new year, I want to share with you some of our ministry goals on a national and local level. Today, at thousands of community centers, high schools, middle schools, juvenile institutions, coffee shops, and local hangouts, YFC staff and volunteers meet with young people who need Jesus. There are currently 161 chapters of Youth for Christ across the country, divided into 6 regions and YFC of Northern Ohio is one of those chartered chapters. Youth for Christ's goal across the country is to reach one million teens. In order to approach the goal of reaching one million teens, YFC has 3 main goals, quoted below from the strategic plan.

GOAL 1: MORE CHRIST CENTERED LEADERS

YFC's leaders will thrive in a Christ-centered culture, being formed into the kind of people through whom God would reach 1 million lost 11-19 year olds each year. Believing God is at work in our world and in our lives, our first goal is to align ourselves, individually and corporately with God's will and His work. A Christ-centered leader is first a follower of Jesus, being transformed into His likeness by the Holy Spirit for God's Kingdom purposes every day. YFC is engaged in spiritual work, so the outcomes that matter most to us are only achieved by God.

GOAL 2: MORE FRUITFUL MINISTRY

YFC's ministry impact will grow as we mobilize and equip more leaders who will engage 1 million lost young people each year. YFC exists to engage lost kids with the Gospel message. We do this through leaders in authentic Christ-sharing relationships, in the hope that as a young person understands the Gospel, they will make a decision to become a follower of Jesus and join us in inviting others to follow Him.

GOAL 3: BUILD A BETTER YFC TOGETHER

YFC's organization will unify, accelerate and fortify our ministry as we scale to engage 1 million lost kids each year. YFC organizes ministry sites to bring support and resources to leaders. YFC organizes chapters to multiply the momentum and effectiveness of ministry sites by engaging more leaders in like-minded pursuit of the mission with sustainable systems, resources, and accountability to common commitments. YFC organizes a National Service Center to lead and bolster the work of chapters by providing

resources and drawing all of us together to find greater strength, clarity and momentum in unified inter-dependence than any of us would have on our own.

On a local level we have subscribed to these goals and are strategizing how and what our part of this goal will look like. This is a large and daunting task, but we look forward to seeing how the Lord will guide us and bring others along to help with this journey.

Thank you for your faithful support of this mission as we seek to reach teens here locally. As we define our exact piece of the pie, we will share that in future communications. We all know that teens are inundated daily with information, but we seek to bring information to them through the confines of a caring relationship where they can be heard and listened to.

Sleepovers & Pillow Fights | Matt Mountjoy

As another calendar year at YFC Wadsworth came to an end, we finished the semester in our traditional fashion with a photo scavenger hunt and a sleepover at Laurie Beal's lake house. We had ten students and four adult leaders participate this year. It was a blast, and even better...drama free! It proved to be a great time where kids from different friend groups got into teams with each other to go around Wadsworth and compete by trying to take the best photos and videos of predetermined silly tasks. This year's highlights included creating secret handshakes with a stranger, pillow fights with a stranger, the group packed someplace small, and our annual Abbey Road photos. Let me tell you, it's really entertaining to watch kids try and convince strangers in Wal-Mart to have a pillow fight with them!

After the game, everyone got food and we went out to Chippewa Lake for the rest of the night. We played games, explored the area, hung out, and, most importantly, shared about Jesus and the Christmas story. It led to great conversations with kids asking a lot of questions. It was awesome to see all of the different leaders have an opportunity to share truth and life with each of these students!



Steve Pausch Executive Director	Local Ministry Directors:	Board Members:
	Scott Hulet	John Heese
	Herb Miller	Barbara Moran-Engler
Laurie Beal Director of Ministry- Wadsworth	Matt Mountjoy	Eric Pfeiffer
	Roger Seward	Bobby Puls
	Stacey Stender	John Roush
Barb Pfeiffer Office Manager		Kathy Stehno

Answered Prayers | Laurie Beal

Finding and reaching new teens to participate in our programs can be difficult. It has always been a challenge, but COVID has added many more layers to the difficulty. Our mentors haven't been allowed to go to the school cafeteria during lunch break at the middle school or the high school since COVID began. Thankfully, we have been invited back to participate in a mentoring program at the middle school starting back up in January, and we are excited about the connections that will be made during that. Each of us hopes and prays for other opportunities in our daily lives to invite and encourage young people to come to Garage youth nights and events. We are always on the lookout to connect teens to the Garage.

In the 13 years I've been at the Garage, I find myself noticing teens walking downtown or in the line at a store and thinking they seem like they should be coming to the Garage. I usually say a prayer and ask God to help them find their way to us if He would desire that. Sometimes, I see them show up a week or two later. And I smile and thank God.

This school year, I have been praying specifically for a large group of kids that I see all around town, hear about their run ins with the police and see them gather just houses away from mine. They are always on the move. They randomly showed up a couple times at the Garage this fall to talk to kids and would leave as any of us mentors approached. The police and ambulance frequent their house. I've tried to introduce myself to them to find out who exactly lives there and find out their story. Each attempt was met with glares, chuckles or disinterest.

Then, one day, a gal I know and have seen at that house asked if she could bring a friend to look at dresses for homecoming. Bam. Her friend, I would find out, was one of my new neighbors. A connection was made, and I invited them to come to the Garage sometime... and stay.

A few weeks went by and as I was driving down the street approaching the Garage, I saw a large group of teens walking in the center of the road acting like they owned it. There was a familiar sway to the bunch that I recognized as I was counting TEN teens. I said, out loud, "Yes! Please be going to the Garage!" Seconds later, I see this group that I had been praying for for weeks, turn into our lot. With tears in my eyes, I thanked God for bringing them there and hoped that they'd stay. They did, but the night got off to a rocky start with immediate drama, threats, and unkind words being shouted between our regulars and our newcomers. I jumped in and calmed things down and spoke of our rules of kindness and respect and thanked our new teens for coming. I told them I hoped they would stay. Surprisingly, they did. Our lesson that evening was on our inherent worth and how Christ sees us and how society and the enemy try to cloud that. But that doesn't change our true worth. Our mentor, Leigh, was sharing the lesson that night and asked questions to the group and then read multiple verses and asked for thoughts on each verse. The teens participated but were restless, and you could tell they were not used to sitting in the same spot for lengths of time. At the end, we asked if anyone had any questions about the lesson or any questions at all.

One kid from the new group asked if they could ask anything at all? With our crew, you never know

what's coming after that. We said yes, of course it's a safe space and we aren't afraid to talk about anything. The young man nervously proceeded to say he felt funny asking it, didn't want to be judged, has wondered about it for a long time and was something he had been told. "If you tear a page from the Bible and roll a blunt with it and smoke it are you going to hell?" We were able to have a cool conversation about how our good works don't get us into heaven anymore than our bad works keep us out and how a personal relationship with Jesus and the choice to follow him and ask for forgiveness is the ticket to heaven. He was noticeably relieved and also heard from us that it was not recommended he do that, however! The only other two questions of the night also came from two others from the same new crowd..."Do all Christians hate gay people? Because I might be gay"...And.."oh, wait, do you have to be Christian to come here? Because I'm not."

I praise GOD those young people came that night and got to hear TRUTH about God. And that they got to hear of THEIR true value and hear that it's regardless of their sexual identity, their smoking history or even their choice to follow Jesus yet . They matter because the ONE who created them says they matter. A few of them have come back and when I holler and say "hi" when I see them near my house, they smile and wave back. One girl even said, "You remembered my name?!" as she smiled a huge smile. Seeds are being planted. Heart are being softened. All glory to God! I feel truly and humbly blessed to be allowed to be part of this ministry!

Anxiety & Teens | Steve Pausch

It was a simple group discussion we do each day at the end of the after-school program and we asked, "What do you want for Christmas?" Some of the answers surprised me.

"A way to cope with my emotions"

"I want a CBD necklace to help with my anxiety"

"I want my family to just get along"

"A mood ring so people know how I am feeling"

I can remember mood rings from many years ago, and I thought they were a joke. But this young lady thought it would help people care about her. This experience drove me to research teen mental health and the following summary from an article may help understand a little of where teens are today.

I came across an article entitled "Teens in America: How the COVID-19 Pandemic is Shaping the Next Generation". The full article can be found here: <https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/teens-in-america-how-the-covid-19-pandemic-is-shaping-the-next-generation>

A very quick summary would include how teens have experienced cancelled proms, graduations and other milestone events, online school, etc. in addition to the trauma of racial violence, political divisions, debates about public health measures, etc. And they are feeling fragile, to say the least. Many are anxious about social interactions and relationships. I recommend the full article for a more nuanced explanation.

I reference the article as a way to say that the teens we meet are feeling many of these same anxieties and fears. While this is a fragile time for many teens, our ministry is intentionally reaching into their lives and pointing them to our Certain Hope in Jesus. Our prayer is that we can help them see Hope in Christ and not in a necklace or a ring. Please continue to pray for young people as they struggle through the teen years.