

# CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

*Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church*

May 2023



## Play Ball! | Steve Pausch

It's baseball season, which is supposed to mean the weather is warmer with more sunny days, but here in Northeast Ohio we know that isn't always true. For the past 18 years, for me, this time of year signals more extended time with young people, since I help coach baseball at the high school level. Most of our YFC meetings with young people are weekly and last less than 2 hours. During that time, we are wearing many hats and making sure things go well. We make sure teens feel welcome, that all adult leaders have info, that food is hot and ready, and that no arguments break out with the large number of teens together, but coaching is different!

As a coach I have many responsibilities....communicate with players and parents, make sure all equipment and the field is ready, make a line up and make game decisions, but I also have a lot of time to just listen. We are with the team 6 days a week for at least 3 hours per day and double that on Saturday usually. Bus rides, locker room, weight room, and the dugout are places where students are talking with one another and often asking for my opinion on a particular issue. I am in their circle, and I get to hear about their lives. It really is daunting to hear the things high school students are dealing with. We have 24 young men on the JV and Varsity baseball team and here are some of their issues that we have talked about.

Two senior young men don't live at home but live with their girlfriends and are having struggles with their relationships. One even disappeared for 5 days and did not contact us.

One young man lives with his grandparents because his parents are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

One player's mom left his dad and moved in with her girlfriend.

One player has never had a parent come watch him play.

Three players have parents who are currently going through divorce proceedings. One mom is recovering from breast cancer.

Two brothers have a very rough home life as their grandma explained it all to me during a rain delay.

In the dugout and locker room, I also get a glimpse into their world, their language, and their jokes. I am often interjecting a quick reminder about proper language and talk, but it also helps me to understand them a little better. After all, I am in their world. Unfortunately, young people aren't always able to leave their troubles behind and these troubles often follow them to the ball field. The insights I gain by listening have helped me understand a little better when someone is having a bad day.

During the course of the season, I take players out 2 at a time for a sit-down dinner. I talk more in depth with them, even asking about their relationship with God. Parents sign a permission slip ahead of time where I explain that I will talk about my faith during dinner, and I have never had a parent not let their son go. When we listen, it gives us a window into who these young people are and when we sit down they are able to hear about the God who loves them just as they are. Thank you for your support that makes this possible.

PLAY BALL!

## **Good Times! Exciting Basketball | Matt Mountjoy**

Two years ago, I wrote to you after watching a really bad Cavs game but having a really good time with a student. This year, thanks to a generous gift from a kind gentleman, I had the opportunity to again take students to see the Cavs. This time, I was able to take two of our juniors from the Wednesday night group. Two years ago, the Cavs were awful. This year, as I'm writing to you, they are in the playoffs. While the result was a loss, the game was incredibly high scoring and exciting. And even better, it was a great opportunity to spend an evening with them and a cool experience.

I had a few goals when we went on this outing. The first of which was obviously to continue to build a relationship with them, where we can care for them and share with them the love of Christ. The second was that I particularly wanted to bring two juniors because these guys will be the core older leadership for next year's Wednesday night group. Both of these young men are guys who have become very invested in the group, attend regularly, and really seem to get a lot out of our discussions. On the drive up and over dinner, we were able to have some good conversations about the Wednesday night program. We were able to discuss ways that the group was beneficial to them, ways we could include more kids in the future, and things that would make the Wednesday nights an even better experience for them. It was really

exciting to be able to hear them talking about becoming more invested in the program and ways that we can better serve and teach them and their peers!

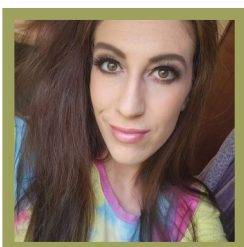
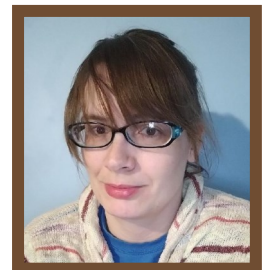
## Teen Parents | Laurie Beal

Our Teen Parents group has been a tightly woven group over the last 14 years. We share tears and laughter and meals and stories and life, and we are a family, for sure. The group provides support and hope for our young parents who find themselves on an unexpected and scary journey. And the group provides much for our mentors, as well. I asked our amazing leaders to give you a glimpse into their hearts to explain why they invest in the Teen Parents program.



Helen writes, "I felt a calling to volunteer with Teen Moms and their babies as it is such a special group. I am amazed by the strength and stamina of these young moms and love watching them grow as mothers and their little ones grow as well. These special young women deserve words of encouragement, support and prayers and I feel lucky and honored to be part of their group."  
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Kristol shares, "I originally started volunteering at The Garage because I wanted to help out in my community in some way. The Garage caught my eye because of all of the ways it served people. I started just by cleaning and organizing for the Teen Moms program. I was nervous to impart any kind of advice on the teens. But they found me while I was cleaning and always talked to me. Advice and mentoring was not as scary as I thought. I realized they needed an adult they can trust who happens to know any kind of helpful info to make parenting a little less difficult. The teens at our ministry in all the programs we offer are worth my time. They are wonderful, amazing, sometimes chaotic teens who just need a village to pour into them. I volunteer to pour into whichever person is put in my path and to help however I can. I love this ministry. We are not perfect and neither are our teens, but God uses us all perfectly."



Raquel, a former teen mom, turned mentor, shared: "I think the best part about being a mentor at Teen Moms is seeing the growth, progress and happiness that happens all in unique ways through all these families. I love helping in ways that once helped

me as a teen mom. I love that with a little help we can make a difference in these parents lives. A little goes a long way and it's so worth watching their journey!"

Leigh writes, "I've been mentoring at the Teen Moms group at The Garage for about 12 years now. It's always fun to get together and share life with these young ladies! All of it, the good, the bad and the ugly :) They are some of the strongest, bravest, hardest working girls I've known. I have seen lots of girls and babies grow up over the years. One of my favorite things about this group is we are like family. God always blesses our time together and helps us encourage and support each other."



Ecclesiastes 4, 9 -12

"Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have

<b>YOUTH FOR CHRIST</b> P.O. Box 323 Wadsworth, OH 44282 330-273-5794 www.northernohioyfc.com	<b>Steve Pausch</b> Executive Director	<b>Local Ministry Directors:</b>	<b>Board Members:</b>
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