

CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

October 2023



Brunswick Teen Center: Bursting at the Seams! | Steve Pausch

September is the time of year that is full of expectation and mystery here at YFC. We wrapped up last school year, had a full slate of summer programming, and prepared for the Fall with several teen get togethers scattered in amongst the planning. Then we waited. We held an open house and met with counselors and administration and young people and parents and talked with other community groups about That Place for Teens (our teen center in Brunswick), but we did not know what the fruit of the labor would be until the first Tuesday afterschool program started. Stacey did a great job preparing adult leaders and the facility for the arrival of teens but we had to wait. Then....The planning and the work paid off when we saw some of our biggest numbers of middle school students attend our after school programs since COVID.

Homework stations, ping pong, pool, crafts and other games occupied the large crowds who then sat down for a family style meal and a daily devotional led by one of our adult leaders. Things went so well one afternoon we had too many in the center and had to turn some away for the day in order to have an appropriate number of teens to adults. Jesus said the harvest is plentiful, and we are seeing it this Fall. We are training and adding more adult leaders to meet the demand and are so excited to see those God has brought in to help.

Our Monday night High School Campus Life group is also seeing a number resurgence and those young people are having a great time with wacky games and a vibrant lesson that speaks to issues in their lives today and how Jesus is the answer. The adults who help out at Campus Life are doing a great job being involved in the lives of the teens also.

Student Spotlight: Parker | Matt Mountjoy

I'm excited to have the opportunity to share with everyone a student spotlight on one of the young men who attends the Wednesday night group at The Garage! Through both coaching and The Garage, I have had the privilege of getting to know him over the past few years. He is a leader for our Wednesday group and in general a leader in the schools for teens in our community. He is someone who is always looking to invite more kids to the group and also is involved in a separate student led Bible study with a group of athletes from school that has started within the past year.

Can you give us an introduction to yourself?

I'm Parker, I'm a Senior at Wadsworth High School. I'm a part of student council, NHS, Huddle, Football, and Lacrosse. I like to hang out with friends and play sports.

(Parker is also being a little modest as he is Student Council President and one of our team captains on the football team)

How long have you been coming to The Garage/YFC?

I've been coming to The Garage for about 3 years now and it was my older friends going there that got me involved.

What do you think are some of the hardest things that teens today have to deal with?

I think that one of the biggest things teens deal with are trying to deal with is the urge to feel included and then they deal with how to handle peer pressure.

Has attending The Garage impacted your life or benefitted you?

I think that it has got me closer to my beliefs and has made me realize how important God is. It's given me a sense of importance of God in my life. I now know how lucky I am to have a relationship with God.

What is your favorite thing about coming to the The Garage?

I like being able to come together with my friends and talk about God and his presence in all of our lives. We are able to have fun and learn at the same time.

What has been your favorite activity at The Garage?

I love frozen turkey bowling! It's very fun and shows how bad we are at bowling!

(Frozen turkey bowling is a Garage favorite around Thanksgiving time, and it's exactly what it sounds like, hucking a frozen bird across concrete at 10 pins [made from 2 liters filled with water.] It gets really interesting the more thawed and beat up the bird gets as the game goes on!)

Looking Through the Waves of Life | Laurie Beal

My husband, Jim, and I started hunting for and collecting sea glass this summer. We add our new finds to a clear glass jar after every excursion. It's crazy how much we've added in just a couple months. I've sought after and collected heart rocks for years and have quite a collection. You don't realize how many rocks are shaped like hearts ..until you look for them.

Long ago, I found a white sea glass heart...But didn't find much sea glass after that. Probably because I was looking for hearts and not sea glass. This past week we were at Mentor Headlands beach and while Jim was digging in the rocks and sand, I found an area closer to the water where there was a thick cover of small rocks on the sand where the waves were rolling in. As I looked down, I had to look fast and also look through the waves coming in to spot the shiny pieces of glass tucked in the rocks. Then I had to keep my focus on them and grab them quickly before the incoming waves moved them. As I was doing this, I was also talking with God out loud as I was walking along. The waves were loud so it just felt like it was God and me. As I was doing this, I wasn't watching the waves coming at me and multiple times a bigger than expected wave attempted to knock me over. I stood firm and kept my focus on the shiny nuggets I was trying to grab...and laughed out loud multiple times as I almost went down.

I took the bucket with our "treasures" we found that day and used that experience of sea glass hunting for my lesson last night at our teen parents support group. There are going to be many waves coming at us all through our life. Some waves will be bigger than others. If we keep our focus ON the waves, we can psych ourselves out and only see the problems coming at us one after another. We can find ourselves just worried about bracing ourselves or running and hiding from the waves. That can become overwhelming.

If we change our perspective and, instead, look THROUGH the wave and look for the treasures below the surface of the water we will be able to see things that we didn't even know were there, because we weren't purposely looking. God protects us from those crashing waves of life and as the problems and adversary attempt to take us down, God places blessings in our path along the way to sustain us and to provide purpose in the pain and struggles of life. We can get into ruts that only allow us to have a mental loop that sees the trials and struggles. Round and round our brain goes in that destructive loop. Not seeing the good ALSO right in front of us.

But God made our brain with plasticity. It has been proven that we can change mental pathways and loops...even deep ones. We can purposely dig a new loop... consistently remind ourselves to look for and find the treasures God has purposely inserted in the waves for us.....praise Him for those things...and rejoice always...and with repetition, we have a new healthier perspective...a perspective that makes our days more bearable and gives a Hope that does not disappoint.

It was neat hearing the discussion after and hear gals relate the wave illustration to their life and offer even more ways to think of it. One young mom saidit's like life keeps coming at you, trying to knock you down, but God keeps throwing good stuff in the waves, too and keeps you from getting knocked down." Yes! All glory to God!

When “Welcome Back” is Not Always Good | Steve Pausch

YFC is a ministry that builds long-term relationships with young people that often last well into adulthood. It is not uncommon for our staff to regularly hear from young people in their 20’s and 30’s and know what is going on in their lives. Our weekly meetings build upon each other as teens return and we share life and experiences together. Many times, young people will start coming to our after school programs in 6th grade and will be around for our Senior send off years later.

One area of concern with returning teens has been in our detention center ministry at the Sandusky County Juvenile Justice Center. The cycle seems to be a difficult one to break when a teen gets in trouble with the law. The circumstances surrounding their first incarceration are often complicated and we will usually hear, “I’m not ever coming back to this place!” The time away from family, friends, and home is often an eye opener to a teen, and they vow to change once they get released. Quite often, the opposite is true and we see them back again. When students are released, we provide them with resources and a Bible to take home to help with their walk with Christ. Recently, a young man returned to the detention center and amongst his belongings from home was the Bible he received the last time he was there, proving that it is difficult to change in an instant.

Please pray for our faithful adult leaders who speak with teens several times a week in the detention center even when a young person they felt was doing so well returns. Please pray against discouragement and even frustration when kids return. We have a unique opportunity to share in the ups and downs of their lives and show them the love and acceptance they need. “Welcome Back” may not always be a good thing but it does give us more opportunities to show how much Jesus Loves these young people!

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