



**July 2025**

## **Thank You! | Steve Pausch**

Thank you for your faithful support of our work with teenagers! Our staff, who meet with students in the detention center, have faithfully been sharing Christ with them, talking about individual issues and problems with them, and spending time playing and teaching them chess.

In our other ministry centers, summer is such a unique activity-filled time of the year. We have a full summer planned but have already completed some special activities. We have been fishing, swimming, spending time baking desserts and sending them home with teens, riding bikes, and hiking. Summer provides a much slower time that allows deeper discussions with students we know and introduces us to new young people for future events.

We still have a full slate of summer activities on tap before many of our student athletes will start practices everyday. We have camping trips and other day trips happening in July. Meeting with young people for ice cream after practice has been a great summer addition the last few years. Surprising the school football or volleyball teams with popsicles has helped to increase our visibility in the school and gets us in front of new students. All this is possible, because your support keeps our staff available for the young people they serve. We are encouraged by what God is doing in the hearts of teens and looking forward to a great fall of ministry.

## School Year Wrap Up| Matt Mountjoy

It's that time of year again where we shift into our summer schedule, and we can look back on last year. So I wanted to take the opportunity to reflect and give everyone a recap. Before we jump back though, as many of you know, this time of year I normally write a newsletter article about our annual Water Wars event. So for those of you who were excited to hear about the annual hydrogen oxide skirmish, we'll start there and jump back.

We have for several years had the WORST possible weather for Water Wars. However, as rainy as this year's late spring was, we had beautiful and warm weather for the event this year. It was an incredible time, and all of our core group of Thursday night kids were there. We started the night with a great conversation, we had some new kids there, and everyone was in a mood for fun. There was a lot of laughter, alliances...and betrayal. It was everything you could want in a water fight. While one of our long time mentors \*Leigh\* hid in the garage desperate to not get wet, Cynthia and I risked the interior upholstery of our vehicles for the chance to soak some of the kids. All in all it was a great success!

Now, onto some serious notes. I would define this year as different from the past simply by saying: New Kids. Probably more than any year I can remember the look from week one to the last week of the school year changed dramatically. This looked different between the Wednesday night group and the Thursday night group, but both were awesome. The Wednesday night crew started the way I would have assumed, we had a lot of underclassmen from last year who we knew were invested and looking to really dive in. Throughout the year this group grew in numbers and depth. They continued to invite friends and wanted to dive deep into the Bible. We had amazing thoughtful conversations and a lot of the direction of learning was led by things they wanted to know more about. They were willing to go beyond surface level, and it provided for a really cool weekly atmosphere, a lot of fun was had but many nights the weekly game was shelved because they wanted to just keep talking about God and the Bible.

At the same time, the Thursday night group changed in unique ways throughout the year. I really didn't know what to expect from this crew. We ended up with a core group that was a little bit smaller but was consistent throughout the year. While overall consistency in numbers was down, we had SO many new kids come through our doors that we got to share Christ often. While many of these kids did not become weekly attenders, I cannot remember a year where we had more new faces come. It was encouraging that most of the new students continued to show up every few weeks. We had nights where it was smaller, and those nights God blessed us with impactful deep conversations. Other times, we had nights with big numbers where a lot of kids got to hear the Gospel and have a lot of fun.

Thank you for praying for this ministry throughout the school year! Please continue to pray that throughout the summer we can build on the relationships we have established, and God can be working in the many students' lives that we are blessed to interact with. Pray also for His Word to spread throughout the young people in Wadsworth!

## Relay-ing | Laurie Beal

I am not a runner. My kids tell me I walk faster than I run and honestly/oddly, despite probably going against every mathematical equation, they are correct! A lot of people have trouble keeping up with me at a store or on a power walk. On more than one occasion I've been at a store with someone and they've hollered up to me (totally unaware that I've lost them) to slow down. Lol. I guess I like getting to the deals fast.

Running with asthma is not the best mix. I tried one year of cross country and have the ribbon somewhere in my parent's basement to prove it. I believe it says 147th place! No lie. Even back then they gave away participation trophies.

Anyways, short story long...I never ran track. But if I would have, I definitely would NOT have run a relay. Relays go against everything in me. I don't want someone else deciding how my race ends. I don't want to rely on someone else to earn that 147th place ribbon. And, especially in this case, I don't want to hold anyone back or be the reason someone else doesn't reach their full potential ... and possibly miss out on getting their 146th place ribbon.

This reasoning/philosophy carries over in the way I view a lot of things in life, I guess. I'm often more inclined to just do things myself, rather than ask for help. There's definitely some stubbornness involved in that. And I think, even harder to admit, there is pride and selfishness involved. I want to see the fruits of my labor. I want it done a certain way. I want to see the job from start to finish, and I want to look at the project when it's done and see what I accomplished.

Recently, one of our students came to group and announced he was moving AGAIN. We instantly had to come to terms with the fact that we, as a ministry team, were going to have to "pass the baton" and entrust this young man to whoever is going to jump into his life in Tennessee. I didn't want to pass the baton. This young man doesn't want to be tossed around again. He has lived in so many different places in his young life and was just settling in and hoping to graduate while living in this home.

We were blessed with being able to help get him into a good space when it comes to school. He was just starting to like school...in fact, he told me recently that for the first time ever he loved it! We were blessed with being able to answer his MANY questions about God and watch his faith grow. We were blessed with really getting to know this awesome young man and see all the good stuff God had created in him.

And then, just like that, he comes in on a Thursday and says he's moving the next week. I didn't sign up for a relay, yet here I was scrambling to tell this young man all the things that I planned on telling him over the next couple years, AS I was handing HIM the "baton," and also giving him instructions on how to find a youth group and a church and places to keep learning about God and places that will have adults that will feel blessed to pour into him, like we have felt.

This young man shared that he has only met his dad twice and has talked to him a couple times on the phone. The last time was 5 years ago. I told him that I was very sorry to hear that. I also told him that I actually felt very sorry for his dad too, because he's missing out on knowing a really cool young man.

He stopped completely in his tracks, thought about it a few seconds and smiled big and said, "Yeah, he is!"

So, that was one of the seeds we got to plant on our portion of the race. Planting the seed that grows that says, "You are important; you are a masterpiece; you are a blessing to this world.", is way better than my 147th place ribbon. Hmmm , there IS great value in a relay!

So, we probably won't be able to be there when he gets baptized. Or when he walks across the stage at graduation. But the thing is, WE aren't the ones making this happen anyways. And this actually isn't even our race. We've been privileged that GOD has allowed us to be involved in a small way in this young man's race. We've been allowed to hand him that water, hold up the signs of encouragement and cheer him on...and now God has him going a different direction. I'm thankful these kids have a GOD whom they can trust on their entire path and thankful we can trust Him, too, to get that baton into the next right hands.

Proverbs 3:5,6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him. And he will make your paths straight.

...Anyone else doing the VBS motions as you read that verse?! :)

Two additional notes:

#1 We aren't quite done cheering on Maurice. I asked him if he wanted to be pen pals with the group. He had no idea what a pen pal was and has never mailed anything...but upon hearing my explanation, YES he wants to and I will mail him self addressed envelopes and stamps to get him started.

#2 If I ever find that ribbon, it will be framed and I'll somehow work it into another newsletter article and will include a pic. Stay tuned!

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