

Synod Youth Report – '09

Over the past 12 months a lot of ministry has been experienced and enjoyed through the Synod Youth Ministry's office. Much of the responsibility of the Dir. of Youth Ministry is equipping people to succeed as they carry out the mission.

In July '08 Rocky Mountain High was hosted at the YMCA with 2550 participants and 125 Support Staff and talent equipped to carry out the mission: *"To provide a large group experience for churched and unchurched young people and adult leaders that challenges them to begin or deepen a faith in Christ that impacts their life."* Many lives were committed to Christ for the first time and two high school student baptisms were experienced with permission from parents back home and carried out by our two chaplains. "The Refuge" a new prayer tent/labyrinth addition to RMH was a great asset as students and adults were able to find a place of solitude and counsel as they wrestled with tough questions and issues they face.

Leaders On the Horizon, (LOH) continues to move steadily through our Synod and across the denomination. The Denomination's Discipleship and Youth Team. (DYT) has embraced this process and has supported LOH financially to enable the material to be edited by the RCA, allowing us to promote LOH through out the denomination. LOH continues to be managed by a team made up of representatives from the Heartland, Great Lakes Synod and the DYT. This year we offered 2 retreats in the SOTHL and one in SGL. We have approximately 100 students in our synod going through years 1 & 2 with 6 churches using it and approximately 40 students and 5 churches engaged in the SGL. LOH is also being used in a two week leadership development camp in 3 of our RCA camps.

Youth Pastor networks continue to be a huge blessing for the equipping of Youth Pastors across our synod. We now have 5 youth pastor networks from Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska connecting with approximately 70 individuals on a monthly and quarterly basis. We have even crossed over ecumenical lines with 2 CRC and an E-free youth pastor in the networks. ☺

Along with the Networks our Synod Youth Team also offered a Youth Pastor Retreat on March 20 – 22, 2009 entitled "Re-Call". This retreat was intended to Encourage, Refresh and Energize youth pastors and their spouses in family, ministry, and their relationship with God. Twelve youth pastors and their spouses enjoyed this week-end retreat and the Youth Team is encouraged to repeat this experience in the future and possibly open up this opportunity to volunteer leaders from churches without a youth staff person.

The Synod Youth Team has become an active team, not only providing leadership to the Synod Youth Ministry but also coming alongside to empower and to be engaged in the Synod youth ministry. It is very helpful to have a team that experiences the events planned by the Synod and helps to plan some of these opportunities.

In 2007 I was trained and certified to lead Crucial Conversations training in the SOTHL. Crucial Conversations is a tool for talking when the stakes are high. In 2008 I led three CC workshops for youth pastors/pastors within our Synod. Approximately 25 people

went through these workshops which have allowed me to continue in a coaching role with many of them as they face difficult situations both in ministry and family situations. This will continue to be a tool I can share with our Synod to equip individuals to be successful in leadership and relationships.

April 3-5, 2009 we held our annual Middle School Retreat at Camp Okoboji, Milford, IA. This is an annual retreat which I recruit 25 NWC students to plan and lead this retreat for Middle School youth and adult leaders. This year we had 350 participants from Mitchel, SD to Des Moines, IA, along with 40 college and high school praise team members, myself and the Admin. Asst. at this retreat. Due to blizzard predictions we condensed a 42 hour retreat into an 18 hour lock-in, with no sleep, enabling everyone to return home safely before the storm began. This retreat continues to be a great opportunity to train young college leaders interested in youth ministry and provide a teaching environment for middle school students that helps them take the next step in their journey with Christ.

This summer HIS Work Camp will join with Rise on the Road ministries, to provide a work camp experience for 225 high school students in Parkersburg, IA. This work camp will challenge each participant in physical service, personal relationships, and spiritual growth. The work camp will be held June 10 – 14 with participants from across the Synod involved in a ministry to bless the community of Parkersburg.

Also in June, Dorothy and Virgil Dykstra from Meredith Drive Church in Des Moines, IA will lead a group of 18 high school youth and adult leaders on a mission trip to Haiti. This trip is sponsored by Rocky Mountain High with some of the funds from the RMH mission offering helping to accomplish this mission.

July 28 – 31 will be the Power Connection Work Camp in Kansas City, MO. This year we have 363 Jr. High youth and adult leaders registered for this work camp along with an additional 15+ support staff and Youth Intern to help accomplish this mission. This group will be working at 18 – 20 sites through out the Kansas City area varying from food packaging to day-care, and clean-up to sorting clothing. Students will be housed at Raytown Baptist Church in Raytown, MO.

From the Work Camp these students will join an additional group of Jr. High students and adults at Maryville, MO for Power Connection, a Jr. High event with the mission: *“To provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to transform student’s beliefs into a lifestyle of faith in God.”* Registrations are continuing to come in and we anticipate a total registration of 1,000+ however we are currently at 655 registrants and may see a dip in attendance due to economic concerns. A great event is planned and we anticipate some great stories to share after the students arrive back in their churches and communities.