

Youth Newsletter

April 2004

Jr./Sr. High Youth Fast for 30 Hours, Raise Over \$1,000 for World Vision

On Friday, February 27, through Saturday, February 28, Bethlehem's junior and senior high youth participated in World Vision's 30-Hour Famine.

Twenty-nine youth and leaders began their fast at noon on Friday, eating their last meal during their school or work lunch period. Until 6:00pm on Saturday, the group would have only water, juice, and chicken broth to drink.

The group began arriving at Graham Hall at 6:00pm Friday, prepared to weather the last 24 hours of the fast as a group at church.

For the next 3 hours, the group had a devotion, participated in several Famine-related activities, played games, and enjoyed some free time together.

At 9:00pm, the group left to go bowling at Classic Lanes in Hampton. Dubbed as a "mission within a mission", each member of the group paid \$13 to bowl for 4 hours, with the proceeds benefiting Johnny Stevenson, an employee at Sara Lee in Suffolk who lost 4 of his fingers in an accident.

The group left the bowling alley at 2:00am, and returned to Graham Hall to spread out their sleeping bags and get some sleep.

Saturday began about 8:00am, as some members of the group had to wake up and leave for other activities. Several members of the group had to leave during the course of the day on Saturday. Some who left continued their fast as best as they could, while several returned after their activities to finish off the Famine with the group.

Saturday brought more devotions and Famine-related activities, with additional free time to play games and watch movies.

Members of the C.O.F.F.E.E. Class arrived at Graham Hall Saturday to set up for their Roast Beef Dinner, and many of the youth pitched in and helped.

The last few hours were the hardest, and many of the group began watching the clock, waiting for the end of the Famine.

At the end of the 30 hours, after a closing devotion, the group was treated to a delicious roast beef dinner by the C.O.F.F.E.E. Class.

In the end, 19 of the 29 youth and leaders successfully completed the Famine as a group at church. Although a final tally is not available at this time, at least \$1,000 in pledges has already been collected and will be sent to World Vision in the coming weeks. That amount will allow World Vision to feed 3 children in poverty for a full year. Thanks to all who supported our youth by pledging a donation!

(cont'd on page 2, 30-Hour Famine)



The group poses for a picture before breaking their 30-hour fast

YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULES

SCOOTERS

- April 4 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
 April 11 **NO REGULAR MEETING**
Easter Sunday
 April 18 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
 April 25 Pioneer Clubs Movie Night,
 5:00pm-7:00pm
 May 2 Regular Meeting, **12:15pm-2:00pm**

VOYAGERS

- April 4 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
 April 11 **NO REGULAR MEETING**
Easter Sunday
 April 18 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
 April 25 Pioneer Clubs Movie Night,
 5:00pm-7:00pm
 May 2 Regular Meeting, **12:15pm-2:00pm**

PATHFINDERS

- April 4 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
 April 11 **NO REGULAR MEETING**
Easter Sunday
 April 18 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
 April 25 Pioneer Clubs Movie Night,
 5:00pm-7:00pm
 May 2 Regular Meeting, **12:15pm-2:00pm**

For more detailed information about your group's schedule, please contact your group's leaders.

ALPHAS

- April 4 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
Pie Sale order sheets and money due
 April 9-10 Easter Lily Mission, time TBA
youth will deliver Easter lilies to shut-ins and nursing home residents
 April 10 Baking in Graham Hall, time TBA
 April 11 Pie & Bake Sale, after church
NO REGULAR MEETING
Easter Sunday
 April 18 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
 April 25 Youth Concert & Revival, 5:30pm-8:00pm
 May 2 Regular Meeting, **12:15pm-2:00pm**

OMEGAS

- April 4 Regular Meeting, 5:45pm-7:30pm
Pie Sale order sheets and money due
 April 9-10 Easter Lily Mission, time TBA
youth will deliver Easter lilies to shut-ins and nursing home residents
 April 10 Baking in Graham Hall, time TBA
 April 11 Pie & Bake Sale, after church
NO REGULAR MEETING
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Alpha Youth Group/Omega Youth Group

Pie and Bake Sale

Freshly baked pies using only the finest ingredients and time-tested recipes

Order yours TODAY!

See any Alpha or Omega youth, or call 539-1966
 Orders taken through Sunday, April 4

Pies can be picked up in Graham Hall on Easter Sunday, April 11

**Chocolate Chess • Coconut
 Lemon Chess**

\$5.00 each

All proceeds will benefit the Alpha Youth and Omega Youth Groups for their continuing mission projects and other activities

(30-Hour Famine, cont'd from page 1)

“We have a lot to be proud of in our young people,” commented David Salerno, an Alpha Youth Group leader and Bethlehem’s Youth Coordinator. “Even while they were doing without themselves, they participated in a bowling fundraiser while people were eating all around them, and they willingly pitched in and helped set up for the Roast Beef Dinner while having to be around all that delicious food. I think that speaks volumes to their dedication and their character.”

Special thanks to the C.O.F.F.E.E. Class for providing our “break-fast” meal—it means a lot to us to have your support. Also, special thanks to George and Sylvia Fowler for providing some much-needed last-minute late-night transportation!

Alphas, Omegas Enjoy Ski Trip

After getting snowed out during their Ski Retreat in January, the Alpha and Omega Youth Groups tried once again to hit the slopes of Massanutten on Saturday, March 6, and Sunday, March 7.

This time, though, it looked like rain and warm weather, not snow, might spoil the group's fun. Throughout the preceding week, the leaders anxiously watched the weather reports and considered various alternative plans.

"We were definitely concerned about the rain and the warm weather," said David Salerno, Bethlehem's Youth Coordinator. "Forecasts were indicating a high around 60 degrees, with morning showers. Although clearing skies were forecast around the time of our arrival at Massanutten, we were still concerned about the potential for rain."

After much consideration, though, the leaders decided to go ahead with the trip as planned.

Up until the day of the trip, the forecasts continued to look favorable for a dry, although warm, Saturday afternoon. However, the group began to worry as they encountered heavy rain shortly after leaving church Saturday morning.

"I was beginning to worry that the rain just might ruin our day after all. Even with warm temperatures and a frozen granular surface, you can still have a good time on the slopes. But skiing while it is raining or snowing is just about impossible, and certainly no fun."



Group shot before leaving Massanutten

However, as the group approached Massanutten, the weather made a dramatic turn for the better.

"As we got close to Massanutten, the rain began to stop, and the clouds began to clear. We could even see patches of blue sky, which made me feel a lot more comfortable about the afternoon."

The group arrived at Massanutten around 11:30am, got their rental equipment, and began to ski and snowboard.

"Although there were two brief showers before 2:30pm, the rest of the day was dry, alternating between clear and overcast. And although the ski slopes were somewhat icy and granular, some areas still had a small amount of loose powder. We're very fortunate that the weather cooperated, and the ski conditions were relatively good for the first week in March."

The group skied and snowboarded until about 9:00pm, then stopped at Applebee's on the way to the hotel for a late dinner. The group checked in to the Sleep Inn in Harrisonburg at about 11:00pm, and quickly settled in for the evening.

In the morning, the group enjoyed the hotel's free continental breakfast, and took full advantage of the hotel's relatively late 12:00noon checkout. After a morning devotion, the group left shortly after noon, and decided to return home along Skyline Drive.

"The scenery was great. We stopped several times at the scenic stops, which provided great views of the valley below. It was such a clear day, we could see farmland, houses, and small towns for miles. We could still see Massanutten Peak most of the way down Skyline Drive."

Although the group had estimated returning to church around 4:15pm, because of the later checkout at the hotel, the return trip down Skyline Drive, and a longer stop for lunch, the group ended up returning to church around 7:00pm.

"Before we left church on Saturday morning, we were quite worried that the weather might once again ruin our trip. But we have such a great group of youth who just enjoy being together, that we decided to go ahead and give it a shot, and everything ended up turning out for the best. Thanks to all the leaders and parent volunteers that help to make these trips happen."

Youth Coordinator's Corner by David Salerno

“Build it and they will come.”

If only it were as simple as that classic line from the movie “Field of Dreams”.

A successful children’s ministry program just doesn’t happen. It takes much planning. It takes countless hours of work by dozens of dedicated, passionate volunteers. And it takes a lot of prayer.

One of our goals during my first year as Youth Coordinator in 2000 was to “define” our youth program. We needed to establish a solid mission statement, including our envisioned purpose and a clearly defined set of goals, to lay a firm foundation that we could later build upon.

To this day, we regularly re-evaluate our “definition” to insure that we continue to have a firm foundation for growth and success.

I feel that a large part of my role as Youth Coordinator is to help provide a vision for the youth fellowship program here at Bethlehem.

As I mentioned in an earlier article, I am a firm believer in the effectiveness of relational youth ministry. In my 10½ years as a junior high youth leader, I have seen this approach work time and time again. But what makes an effective youth program?

I firmly believe that an effective youth fellowship program consists of three primary elements in a proper balance: fun enjoyable activities, church and community projects, and practical Christian instruction.

I feel that fun and enjoyable activities absolutely have to be a part of any youth ministry program in order for it to be successful. Children will more actively and eagerly participate in something if it is fun and enjoyable.

That’s just human nature, even for us adults. If you question that, simply observe people as they walk into the dentist’s office. Most aren’t exactly eager to be there, because no matter how wonderful the dentist might be, most dental procedures by their very nature are just not that much fun. People are generally at the dentist’s office because they **have** to be, not because they **want** to be, and their attitudes usually reflect that.

Sadly, I have seen youth programs that more closely resemble a dentist’s office. Little emphasis was placed on fun and enjoyment, and I felt that many of the children were there because they felt they had to be, not because they wanted to be. And, no matter how wonderful the teacher was, the teaching couldn’t help but be ineffective.

However, great things begin to happen when you have children **wanting** to come to youth group, and actively and eagerly participating, because it is fun and enjoyable.

First and foremost, the teaching **instantly** becomes much more effective. Children become more eager to learn, and more readily absorb and retain what is taught.

Additionally, as a parent, you begin to find it much easier to encourage your child to participate in youth group. In fact, you may have to do little encouraging at all—your child will **want** to come to youth group for himself.

Eventually, others in the community begin to see the excitement building, and want to become a part of it. Children will invite their friends to enjoy youth group with them, and entire families will enter into the fellowship. An effective youth fellowship program also just happens to be a very good outreach program.

But lastly, and perhaps most importantly, children learn to associate joy and happiness with learning about Jesus and following Him. I can think of nothing better that we could hope to pass on to our children.

No, fun and excitement should not be the only element of a youth fellowship program, and we should never forget to put Jesus at the heart of all that we do. But, in its proper balance, fun and excitement is the oil that makes the engine run much more smoothly, the means by which the other goals become much more attainable. Because how can we demonstrate the joy of Christian living if we are not full of joy and happiness ourselves? And how can we excite children about a relationship with Jesus if we are not excited about Him ourselves?

Next month, I will talk about the other two elements of an effective youth fellowship program, and the importance of finding and maintaining the proper balance. Until then, God bless,

