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## SUMMER PROGRAMS REACH KIDS AND YOUTH

Summer days at the Mission can sometimes turn into a daze. While all of the regular activities, including the coffee hall and clothing distribution, continue at the regular pace, the opportunities to reach out to children and youth move into a higher gear.

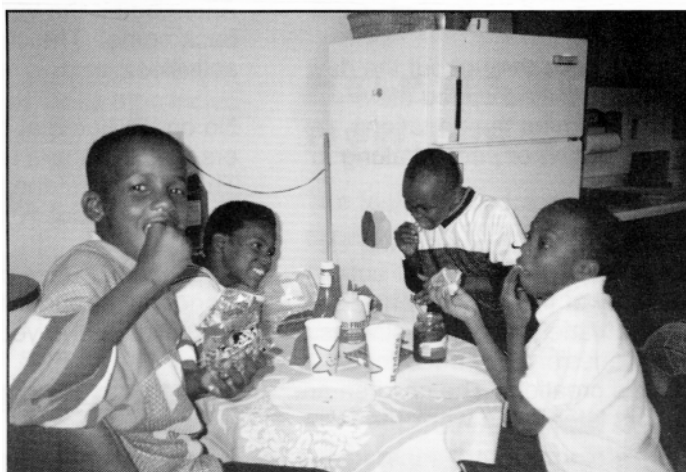
Here's a glimpse into a hectic, but fairly typical, summer day at the Mission.

The day begins at 5:30 A.M. when the Mitchells pick up four or five of the youth and take them to the gathering point for the corn detasseling crew. As part of our effort to provide employment training and opportunities, a number of the youth are detasseling corn this summer. It's a difficult job, but several of them are doing very well. Transportation is a key component of a successful work experience for them.

Everything is ready for the coffee hall to open shortly before 9:00 A.M. Eight to ten people are waiting when the doors are opened. Over thirty will come for coffee and doughnuts during the coffee hall hours this morning.

The van begins its first trip of the day when one of the Mission staff leaves to pick up bread and other baked goods at one of the local grocery stores. We serve these items in the coffee hall and distribute the rest to people who come for clothes and other items. Some of the bread ends up at the two nearby housing units for seniors who are often in need.

Another trip to pick up donated items at a local thrift shop keeps the van moving. These clothing and household items are placed in the sorting room where they will be prepared for distribution.



Several of the children enjoy hot dogs and chips in the kitchen at the Mission. They arrived early for the afternoon program and needed a quick lunch.

One of the youth involved in Mission programs needs a ride to summer school this morning, so another trip breaks up the morning even more.

Clothing distribution begins at 10:00 A.M. Today is scheduled for women to pick up clothes and over twenty-five come. Several volunteers have arrived to check the women in and help them as they select clothes for themselves and their families.

Some household items, bread and baked goods are also available.

While clothes are being distributed, one of the Mission staff starts to organize the tents, sleeping bags, and other equipment from the youth camping trip over the past weekend. The equipment is cleaned, organized, and stored away for the next time it will be needed.

More volunteers arrive as the clothing distribution is ending. The distributed items are counted and recorded as the women check out. The volunteers begin straightening the remaining clothes and refolding the women's and children's clothing that is stored in boxes. As these boxes are moved back into the storage areas, the final tally is announced that over a thousand items have been distributed today. It's a good number.

Before the various staff leave for lunch, there is time for an informal staff meeting. Afternoon plans and activities scheduled for the upcoming week are discussed.

The high school youth at summer school needs to get picked up at noon. He will spend the afternoon at the Mission working on his homework. A quiet place is available for him to study and staff are around to answer questions and explain problems to him when he needs assistance. Summer school is critical for him to continue making academic progress. He's doing well and experiencing some success.

Clothing donations continue to arrive throughout the day. A number of household items are also dropped off. Activity picks up in the sorting room as the donations arrive and are readied for distribution or passed along to other agencies.

Between 1:30 and 2:00 P.M. we begin to pick up the elementary children who are involved in the summer activities. Today the children will stay at the Mission and participate in games, crafts, and a variety of other activities. The Bible verse for today is Genesis 1:1 and the focus will be on learning about God's creation. The children are excited when they are told that later in the week they will go swimming at a nearby pool.

While some of the staff work with the children, the Mitchells are putting some finishing touches on plans for their trip to a Bible camp in northern Wisconsin scheduled for the next week. They will be taking five of the children with them and spending a full week there. Final arrange-

ments need to be made for travel plans, physicals, and items the children must bring. Sleeping bags and other items will need to be provided by the Mission.

The youth on the corn detasseling crew have arrived back in town and need to be picked up and taken home. One of the younger children also needs to be taken home to pick up his inhaler because his asthma is bothering him.

Another one of the youth from the Mission is leaving today for a week-long basketball camp in Pittsburgh. The cost of his trip is being covered by the Mission, but he needs a ride to the bus station and some encouragement along the way. It's another trip around town, but an important part of our ministry.

As we notice that the afternoon is getting quite hot outside, we take popsicles out of the freezer and deliver them to a number of seniors who are out in the weather sitting behind their building next door. One of the youth helps deliver the popsicles and enjoys the opportunity to brighten the lives of other

people in a small way.

Soon dinner for the children is being served. Today's menu includes sloppy joes, potato chips, fruit cups, and a giant cookie cut into slices for dessert. During the summer when there are no school lunches, the children need nutritious meals.

After dinner, the van is loaded with the children for the trip back home. The children have enjoyed the afternoon activities.

No one is home at one of the houses and the two brothers who live there return to the Mission with the van. They end up at the Mitchells' home until their sister returns at about 10:00 P.M.

The summer daze can be a real challenge, but it is also a wonderful opportunity for expanded ministry, especially to the children and youth.

## INTRODUCING SHANNON

A very special person has been added to the Mission staff this summer. Shannon Stoneking will be working as the summer children's program assistant throughout the summer. She brings a deep love for the children and an enthusiastic attitude to the ministry here.

*Loving is caring — caring about the needs of others and responding to those needs with the resources at our disposal. Christ's kind of love does not require that we bully like everything about the people we are caring for. It does require that we are fully interested in their needs and that we respond to them, not necessarily because they deserve it, but because we are committed to following Christ and replicating His responses to people. This is a love that begins at home. It affects neighbors and moves through streets of our community, into our workplace, and into churches. We know how to love because we follow Christ (example. Think of the impact that loving as Christ loved would make.*

*Joseph M. Stowell, Following Christ:  
Experiencing Life the Way It  
Was Meant to Be  
(Zondervan, 1996), page 193.*

Her primary responsibilities will involve planning and directing the afternoon program for the children at the Mission this summer. Children in the program will be involved in activities three afternoons each week throughout the summer



Shannon Stoneking leads some of the children on a trip to the zoo. The summer program for children at the Mission includes a number of field trips and other outings.

"I really want these children to know that God loves them," Shannon says. "And I want them to see that love of God in action here at the Mission." Shannon knows that the most important truths about the Gospel need to be demonstrated as well as taught.

Having an adequate staffing level is essential to provide the kind of in-depth relationships we are trying to establish with these children and their families. The summer program brings children to the Mission, but we want to make sure that the summer program is an effective means of bringing children to faith in Jesus Christ. Building relationships that bring children to faith is the main reason for adding this staff position.

Shannon has completed an associates degree at Lincolnland Community College and is currently working on additional training in ministry. She has been very active in the children's ministry at Calvary Temple Christian Center in Springfield.

She has also participated in a number of mission trips over the past several years. Several of these trips included working with children in inner-city settings.

"It's really a God-thing as I see it. When I discovered that I could do this kind of ministry with children with these kinds of needs right here in Springfield, I knew that God was in it," Shannon said. When you stop by the Mission, be sure to encourage Shannon in this vital ministry. And be sure to keep her and the children in your prayers.

## **FINANCES DIP IN SUMMER MONTHS**

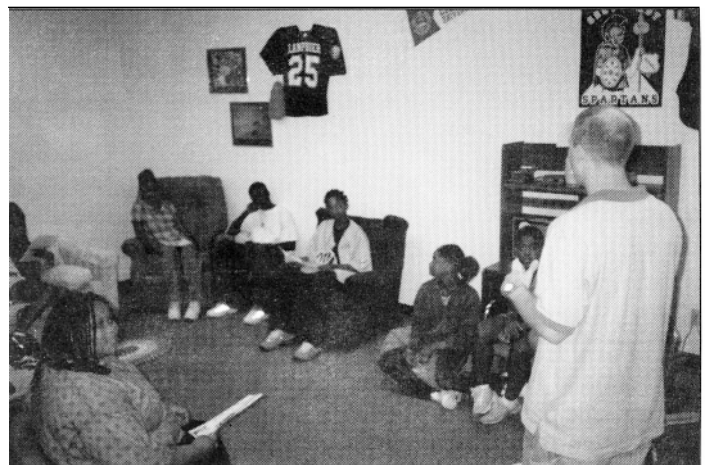
The summer months provide wonderful opportunities for ministry, but they are often very tough on the Mission's

finances. Like many other ministries, we typically experience a decline in the number and amount of donations during the summer months. As a result, we are often forced to make difficult, and sometimes costly, decisions about using financial reserves.

When the opportunities for ministry are so great at this time of the year, it hurts to be forced to consider cutting back or failing to take the fullest possible advantage of each opportunity based simply on cash flow problems.

The faithful friends and supporters who continue to remember the ministry here during these months are particularly appreciated. Their consistent giving makes it possible for us to continue moving forward serving people here in the name of Jesus. Your help is essential. Please do not allow vacations or other busy summer activities to distract you from the part God may be calling you to play in supporting his work here.

We know that there is broad support for the ministry of the Mission, even when the donations are a little slimmer than usual. Above all, we know that God is faithful and will provide for all of our needs.



The Thursday evening youth Bible study is led by Ricky Fritch, Coordinator of Youth Ministries at the Mission. The Bible study often provokes energetic discussion.

## **HELP US BEGIN TO PREPARE NOW FOR CHRISTMAS**

The founding director of the Mission, Bob Brown is remembered for two statements he made about celebrating Christmas here. First, he said that the Christmas tree at the Mission should touch the ceiling. Second, he said that boxes of candy distributed to the children should be so full that they do not rattle when they are shaken.

Both of those memorable statements reflect the joy and exuberance that we try to express in our celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. During the summer months, Christmas may seem to be a long way off, but it takes time to prepare to celebrate well.

We try hard to involve families in our celebration of



A good group of about sixty people attended our volunteer appreciation dinner at the end of the school year this spring. Several of the Mission youth helped serve the dinner. The music was one of the highlights of the evening.



Christmas. Rather than simply giving gifts to the children who participate in the Mission's programs, our major Christmas gift-giving effort is centered on parents, usually mothers, selecting gifts for their own children.

About two weeks before Christmas, we invite the parents to come to the Mission to select gifts from the variety of gifts we will have available. Volunteers come that day to help in the gift selection and to wrap and label the gifts. The parents are able to leave with gifts ready to put under their tree, ready to enjoy the kind of family Christmas celebration that would otherwise be impossible for them to afford.

Our experiment with this approach last year was very successful. We believe that it helps to strengthen families at the same time that it proclaims the joyful message of the birth of Jesus Christ. It also provides unique opportunities for volunteers and others who wish to contribute to this effort.

How can you help? Most importantly, we need to have a wide variety of gifts available. Plan now to purchase new toys and other gift items for children up to about age thirteen and bring them to the Mission. Perhaps this can be a family project and a good way to involve your children in the joy of giving. Maybe you can include your Sunday School class or other church group in the purchasing of gifts.

The success of this approach depends on having the best and widest selection of gifts that we can put together. We can only make that possible with your help and planning to be involved now will make it even more successful.

We will also need volunteers on the gift selection day. If you would enjoy helping the parents select gifts or wrapping the presents to make them as attractive and inviting as the message of Christmas should be, begin now to think about volunteering in this way.

We want the message of Christmas to be proclaimed here in a joyful and exuberant manner. We need to begin planning now to make it happen.

## **REGULARLY SCHEDULED** **ACTIVITIES AT THE MISSION**

Coffee Hall: each weekday morning from 9:00 to 11:00 A.M.

Summer Children's Ministry: activities, field trips, games, Bible studies, and meal on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:30 to 6:00 P.M.

Youth Ministry: activities, snack, and Bible study on Thursdays from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M.

Women's Bible Fellowship: Bible study and luncheon on first and third Tuesdays of the month from 10:00 A.M. to noon

Clothing Shop: open for men on Mondays and Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:00 A.M., open for women on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10:00 to 11:00 A.M.

Drop-Off of Clothing and Household Items: each weekday from 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. and Saturdays from 9:00 A.M. to noon

### **OUR MISSION**

**To share the love of Jesus Christ with the people of Springfield by providing opportunities that meet their spiritual and physical needs.**