



Camp for a Cause



Last year, the youth of Rehoboth Congregational Church (rehobothucc.org) in Rehoboth, Mass., went on their annual mission trip, this time to Washington, D.C. There they worked in homeless shelters, feeding, serving and getting to know people.

"Over conversations and board games, they learned that many homeless people are normal, just like them, only down on their luck," explains Kim Sylvia, the church's youth-group director. "It made them say, 'We want to do more.'"

The commitment served as a catalyst for a three-day campout the weekend before National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week (November 11–17). Nearly 50 kids from the 150-attendee church camped out in cardboard-box tents in a local park along the city's main road to raise awareness and money for homelessness. The weekend also included activities for the youth such as a guest speaker, a candlelight service and campfires for the students to stay warm in the freezing temperatures.

"People from the community drove by, saw the kids camped out and stopped to ask what was going on," Sylvia says. "Then many came back with donations or food or hot chocolate."

By the end of the weekend, the youth group had raised \$12,000—and donations from the community continue to pour in. The kids plan to continue their fight against homelessness by maintaining their activism and service to their local homeless community. Beginning in January, once a month, the group will prepare food and serve some 300 homeless people at the church cafeteria with hopes that their continued efforts will build relationships and draw people into the church.

Because the kids did much of the camp-out planning, advertising and counting of the money, they learned that their age doesn't matter much when trying to impact the lives of those around them, says Sylvia. "They discovered that they can make a big difference for God."

—H.J.

UNDER THE LIGHTS The bright lights of high school stadiums now illuminate not only the game, but also the beliefs of student athletes through Fields of Faith (fieldsofffaith.com).

Begun in 2004 by Fellowship of Christian Athletes (fca.org), this annual October event is inspired by King Josiah, who, at the age of 16, changed his country by gathering the people together and challenging them to keep the commands of the Scriptures. Similarly, Fields of Faith brings students together on their schools' athletic field for one night to hear students sharing faith stories.

Fields of Faith's inaugural event drew 6,000 students on fields in three states. In 2006, two years later, the event reached more than 55,000 students in 35 states on 380 fields.

Bear Creek Baptist Church in Katy, Texas, served on one of these fields. The church cancelled their Wednesday night small group program to encourage the students and their friends to attend the local Fields of Faith event. Between 100 and 125 of Bear Creek's youth did.

"It's important for this generation to connect to other believers," Bear Creek Student Pastor Bill Muench says. "They hear from pastors and from churches, but they don't hear from each other."

His students were encouraged and inspired to hear the faith stories of their peers, and many felt more comfortable worshipping in a crowd of people they viewed as just like them. "They need confidence to live out their faith," Muench says. "Now they've been empowered to go back to campus and take a stand."

—Kim James

67%

The percentage of U.S. adults who are in support of letting public schools provide contraceptives to students. Sixty-two percent believe providing birth control reduces the number of teenage pregnancies.

Source: Associated Press-Ipsos poll