

THE LION'S DEN

40 Front St.,
PO Box 51142, Indian
Orchard, MA 01151

www.LionsDenOutreach.org



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Youth Outreach Center

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Word of Life Island

By Lia Collazo

This past summer I had the privilege of taking some great kids from Church in the Acres and the Lions Den to camp at a beautiful island called The Word of Life Island. The Island is a very spiritual place where God is really working. It is truly a peaceful place and everyone there was just so loving and caring.

The week started with the kids taking a ferry ride to the Island, which I have to say, was breath taking. As we reached the Island we were welcomed by very sweet and excited volunteers and a sign that read "A Very Special Island". The Island was a beautiful camp area. The volunteers were all young Christian adults. I could just feel how special the Island was right away. The kids were assigned to leaders and taken to their cabins. They had it all there. For the week they had a big dinning room with good food, a beach area, wall climbing, Wii games, paint ball games, quite area, lawn chairs, and basketball to name a few of things at this Island. They had activities continually through the week. And with all that they had a service twice a day to learn about being a Christian through skits and speakers. The chapel was made of wood. It was beautiful with lots of sitting. It was such a blessing to see all those kids rush into the chapel with such excitement. To hear from the kids the impact that the Island was having on them and to see them so happy all week was an awesome feeling. The kids were tired by the end of the week because they were so active all week. Some of the kids' comments about Word of Life Island are... Angel - "Comfortable, good place to go to when need help", Miguel - "The best. I want to go again", Jocelyn - "The best place ever. I loved it!" Erick - "The best thing ever to happen in my life other then getting baptized", Ashley - "I learned a lot about God that I would not have known before. It made me believe in God more. I was saved there", Equawn - "Fun, learned a lot, new friends. I felt good."

When it was time to come home no one wanted to leave the Island. One of the special effects that came about from their experience at the Word of Life Island was the unity between the Lion Den's kids and Church in the Acres kids. We see more of the Lions Den kids at church on Thursdays Family Night and at Sunday service. That alone is very special. There were also about eight kids that were saved at that Island. It truly was a blessing to me to be able to share the experience at that special island with these very special kids.

Living out a Dream

On a cold December night, almost 100 people gathered in a church hall about 15 minutes from the Lion's Den. There is the smell of cooking chicken, mashed potatoes, and green beans (along with the distinct smell of banana custard pie). The lights were down low and there were Christmas lights everywhere. The gathering is the annual Angel Tree party. Working with Chuck Colson's organization, Church in the Acres (CIA) annually takes a list of names of families whose mom or dad are incarcerated and gets a list of desired Christmas items from them. Then like churches and organizations all over the United States, CIA passes out those names to people in the congregation to go shopping for the perfect gift. They wrap it and bring it back, and then just a few weeks before Christmas the church hosts a party and 15-20 families join a regular church gathering converted into a very special party. The event coordinators, Gina

Dyson and Nancy Hand, are both members of Church in the Acres and regulars at the Lion's Den. Gina has been involved since the Den's inception, focusing most of her efforts on working weekly with the children's program, and Nancy has volunteered regularly with the girl's night program. On this particular event, they used all their talents and gifts to bring together members & friends of the church, cooks, musicians, and teens from the Lion's Den to make a difference in the lives of these families whose loved ones are incarcerated.

As the kids would say, the party was "off the hook"! It was intense and lots of fun. As people walked in, they were greeted by teens at the door and encouraged to find a seat at the beautifully decorated tables. Christmas music was playing in the background and then after introductions and prayer, the servers began to bring out food from the kitchen. If you

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The Lions Den...and your Church?

By Pam Winters

Many churches know how gratifying it is to go on a mission's trip. For those who have had the privilege of participating in missions trip you know what a life changing experience it is. If you ask anyone who has gone and they will tell you stories that are God orchestrated, heart warming, and life changing. Most of the time when you think of missionary work you think of going to another state or country. This is true and while missionary work abroad is necessary and very fruitful, have you ever thought about local missionary work? Local missionary work is immediate gratification and can be ongoing. You are able to have your cake and eat it too!

Your church could become missionaries at The Lions Den. How you say? Well here are some basic and not so basic opportunities

1. Pray. We need you to pray regularly for the Den.
2. You can arrange for a group to come to the Den to do service work such as cleaning, painting, yard work, or even renovation work.

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safe
place
for
youth

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The Incarnation of Jesus

by Jeff Stappenbeck

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 18" Matthew 1:18

I can only imagine what Joseph must have been going through when he found out Mary was pregnant. Mary, the woman who was betrothed to him; the woman who was to maintain her committed faithfulness to God and Joseph, by remaining a pure virgin until their betrothal was complete, was actually pregnant! Joseph must have been devastated.

At a recent Lion's Den Bible study, during the Advent season, we discussed Matthew 1:18-23. Sadly, in the lives of Lion's Den youth (and youth across the country today), it would not be abnormal to find a young teenager, like Mary, pregnant before marriage. In Mary's day, pregnancy before marriage was not normal. Her being pregnant while maintaining her virginity was not natural, but in fact impossible. To help the Lion's Den youth understand this, a male volunteer pretended to be pregnant, by placing a basketball under their shirt. This image grabbed the youth's attention. The Lion's Den youth realized that just as it would be impossible for a man to be pregnant, it was also impossible for Mary to be a virgin and pregnant; both

cases are not naturally possible.

"But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel' (which means, God with us)" Matthew 18:20-22

As the text indicates, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and encouraged Joseph to take Mary as His wife, because she was in fact faithful to God and him, while still a virgin. The youth reflected upon the impossibility of a virgin conceiving a child. How that made Jesus' birth the product of God's supernatural intervention into the natural processes of child birth. As a result, the foundational doctrine of the Incarnation was realized; Jesus was 100% God and 100% man. Emmanuel; God with us!

The foundation of God doing the impossible and becoming a man has now laid the foundation for the Lion's Den youth to go deeper in their understanding of Christ's death on the cross. The Lion's Den youth are understanding, thirsting for, and going deep with Christ!

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remember the recent children's movie "Beauty and the Beast," when the meal was served, the animated dishes came out singing "be our guest". It looked a lot like that.

The teens were courteous and knowledgeable. They went out of their way to ensure the food was served quickly and efficiently. Many people commented about the teens. Some from the Lion's Den and others from the church. They have been worshipping God together now for several months so the lines are positively blurred! They were simply teens ready and able to help others in need. Soon after the meal was served, the entire group was invited to hear the live music of the Halloday family from NH. Jason and Kristie Halloday and their children did a superior job helping us see and sing the real meaning of Christmas. Soon after that, the smallest children went down stairs to participate in a craft time led by none other than the teenagers! It was great to see them helping the little ones paste and cut and color.

When we first opened the Lion's Den over 7 years ago, it was our desire that some of the Lion's Den teens would get plugged into local churches and they would not only come to Christ but also live their lives out for and with Him. Serving others is one of the

greatest things that we get to do. You would have loved to see those teens so joyfully helping others. One of the best parts about that is they are getting bit by the "love thy neighbor" bug. It is in a highly contagious- H1N1 has nothing on this! We can't wait to see and understand what the Lord will do in these young lives in the days to come.

It was a great moment of seeing the true body of Christ. Old and young, white and black, seekers and well grounded, all gathered to help others and to clearly share Christ. The gospel story was told several times that night and I had the privilege of sharing God's great story one of those times. Several individuals asked for prayer and we gave out some helpful next step literature at the end of the night for anyone interested in having it. We pray that the seeds sown there will take root to everlasting life.

Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and assistance in all of these efforts. We know that as God's people pray, much will be accomplished for Christ. Dreams will become realities to the glory of God.

With eternity in mind,

PG

"Pressures at school make it hard sometimes. The Lion's Den teaches me that peer pressure isn't good and you shouldn't fall for it, all you get is consequences. The Lions Den gives me positive peer pressure to follow God!" – Jocelyn

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3. You can provide food. The youth at the Den eat! They eat a lot.

4. You can bring your talents and gifts to volunteer at the Den.

BUT WAIT! THERES MORE!

Here are some things that you may consider. You can become a part of growing the youth at the Den. The youth need mentors; you could provide mentorship for the youth. By becoming a partner with the Den your church could provide a place that the kids could call their church home. You could provide discipleship groups for the youth, how about involving the kids in your youth group? Eventually maybe you could even invite the kids' families to church! These kids need good relationships, love and encouragement! The options are endless the rewards are many!

Please consider being a part of Kingdom work at the Lions Den.

Luke 10:2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to

Go Red

I am the Lion's Den pool table. I have seen years of children and teenagers bond and grow. I have stood in the middle of the room as a gathering point for lots of fun to happen. Teenagers and children love to spend their hours at the Lion's Den crowded around me, laughing and playing games.

Before I came to the Lion's den, I was already well used. Some of the green of my felt was stained and my banks were falling down. When a ball hit those spots the ball would roll right off the table. Although I may not have been in tiptop shape, I brought a lot of love. I may have introduced someone to Jesus. I provide the opportunity for ministry and discipleship, while enjoying a game of pool. I have been used as a game, and as a seat where many teens through the years have sat and listened to bible study. Some teens have chosen to accept Jesus Christ into their hearts in the very room where I am located.

Recently, a regular Lion's Den volunteer, George Laroe, decided that it was time that something was done about me. George was about to give me an extreme pool table makeover! I was gone for one week from the Den, and all the teens missed me! Although my renovations were more than George was expecting, my makeover was a success. I am now back in business and better than ever before. I am back at the Den and looking great.

I am excited for years to come of being a place for ministry to happen. I am excited for the conversations that will happen about Jesus, and the friendship that will be built through my presence. In the next years I will stand here tall and strong as the children grow into teens and the teens grow into young adults. I will see the growth of their hearts and I will watch as the Lions Den kids become witnesses of Christ's love.

My old felt was green. My new felt is red for the blood of Jesus Christ. A lot of the world has been saying, "go green" We are saying, "Go Red!"