

Soli Deo Gloria

April 2012

Introduction:

Two years ago, I took a 3 month course in Foundations of Community Development. This course gave me a better understanding of the Biblical principles God has given us for individuals and communities to become more Christlike in all areas of life. It's been my desire since that school to show people how the Truth of the Gospel impacts and redeems all areas of life. Therefore, as I've felt led, I've been working at advancing these principles and encouraging our YWAM base to be more involved in our local community in Lakeside. Below, I've explained some of the projects I've promoted and ongoing ministries I've been involved in. Last summer, I also spent several months in Haiti working toward similar goals.

Community Development track:

Last Fall, I led a Community Transformation "track" for the Discipleship Training School. YWAM Montana runs their Discipleship Training Schools with what we call "focus tracks" which provide students with training to develop skills they are passionate about and can use in missions. The track that I ran helped the students develop a variety of skills related to a healthy community, such as water purification and cultural protocol. This provided the students with tools to take on outreach and gave them a better understanding of how the Truth of the Gospel impacts all areas of life. Part of this track involved serving the local community at a homeless, transitional shelter, called Samaritan House. It was good for my students to invest in a long-term ministry in Kalispell and at the same time it helped build stronger relationships between our base and this shelter. Another hands-on task we did was raking leaves for some elderly people, which they appreciated greatly. The students were able to pray with one woman when she shared with us her financial difficulties and she was really touched.

Family getting evicted:

The family of two of the youth group teenagers had a very difficult Fall. The parents (for ease of reading, I'll call them "Bill and Linda") had gotten married last summer and then radically saved in a local church. But they haven't had steady work and Bill deals with alcoholism. This is Linda's third marriage and she was pregnant with Bill's child. They hadn't paid their mortgage in a year and were told they would be evicted. Around the same time, Linda had a miscarriage and Bill relapsed into alcoholism. In addition, the grandmother who lives with them has stage 4 cancer.

I had never met Bill and Linda but I felt like it was an appropriate time to offer help. So another staff member and I took the family dinner every evening for a week while Linda recovered from the miscarriage surgery and Bill was in rehab. It was such a sad situation, but they were very grateful for the practical help and we were also able to pray with Linda and her mom. They have since been evicted from their house and are living in a motel in Kalispell. Please pray that Linda finds a job and for Bill (who is currently in an 18-month rehab facility trying to turn his life around and become able to provide for his family). Please also pray for the kids in the middle of this, they are dealing with a lot of shame. I know God can use this situation to draw them to Himself, but there are important choices they need to make.



Our track serving at Samaritan House



Raking leaves



Outdoor class

Samaritan House:

I already mentioned the homeless, transitional shelter; it's called the Samaritan House. The Samaritan House recently felt they needed to serve 3 meals a day to their residents, but found they didn't have enough help to prepare and serve all the meals nor the budget to pay for it. So, they reached out to churches in the area and our YWAM base asking for help to buy, prepare and serve one meal a week. Believing that this would be a great outreach effort, I presented the opportunity to our base staff and then worked up a schedule. Our YWAM leadership approved my proposal, which was to have our kitchen prepare enough food for 30 extra people every Monday and then the YWAM staff who volunteer to do this simply take the prepared food and serve it at the shelter. It's been going very well and I feel like this is the beginning of our base becoming more involved in the community on a consistent basis. As God leads, I hope to create more opportunities for our staff to serve locally.

Youth Group:

I've been helping with a middle-school aged youth group at a local church in Lakeside since last April. It appears these kids all come from very dysfunctional backgrounds and I don't think any of them have a genuine relationship with the Lord. My YWAM base is located in an area which is quite depressed economically and it's getting worse with the current economy. Most of the buildings on our main road are bars and casinos, which I know many of the parents of my youth group kids frequent. This age group can be very unruly so it is quite challenging for me, but I so desire to see them come to know Jesus as their Savior. We want the kids to know as much about Jesus as possible so we're doing a series of teachings on the life of Jesus. We've been able to share the Gospel with them a few times and most of them were really listening. Please be praying for them to hear exactly what they need to and for their hearts to be receptive.



Games at youth group

Act Bags:

Having heard of the idea from a friend in a Colorado church, I started an initiative of passing out "Act Bags" to local homeless people. These ziploc bags are filled with non-perishable items (i.e. granola bars, crackers, socks, wet wipes, hot hand warmers). Last summer and Fall, I noticed an increase in the number of people standing at major traffic intersections holding cardboard signs saying things like, "can't find work, anything helps." 1 John 3:17-18 exhorts us that love is an action and Jesus showed us how to live that out. However, I think we all struggle to know exactly what to do for the poor. The Act Bags are something useful to hand out which, hopefully, could lead to a conversation. In fact, one of our YWAM staff was able to talk with a homeless man living in his car and ended up leading him to the Lord. God wants to use us to reach the broken and this is just one simple action step God led me to do.

Leadership13 and grant writing:

In addition to my involvement in the community, I've been working with a Leadership Development Group (Leadership 13) which coaches leaders at other YWAM bases (in the States and internationally) to help them develop as leaders and become better able to do the ministries God has called them to do; the work this group does has seen great results.

Leadership13 asked me to join their team to do some administrative work, such as taking notes during meetings, helping to create a brochure and also a website. In addition, they asked if I would research Foundations that would be interested in funding what they do and then write grant proposals for it. Since I've never written grants before, Leadership13 paid for me to take a 6-week online grant writing course. It's great practical experience for me and I feel like this is something God wants me to learn because it will be very useful in the future. Once their website is up and running I will email the link!

Reading Buddies: I'm also involved in helping our base connect with our local elementary school. As I mentioned in the "youth group" section, a lot of kids in this area come from some really difficult family situations. A few moms who are on staff met with the school principal who suggested that it would help immensely if any available staff could read with the more troubled kids once a week. They also tend to be the ones who struggle with school work. So, since the Fall I've been reading once a week with two boys, Triston and CJ, who are both in the 3rd grade. It's a great way for us to serve our community and make a difference in the lives of these children.

Personal Note: It has been an interesting Fall and Winter. I've been taking one step at a time, as God leads me, and have found myself serving Him in ways I didn't expect. For one thing, I feel that working with Leadership13 is preparing me for tasks God has for me in the future. In addition, it hasn't always been easy to find good opportunities for our base to get more involved in the community and then connect our staff to those, but it has been well worth the effort. I'm so thrilled to see God opening up even more possibilities and I look forward to seeing how we can impact our community with the Gospel in all areas of life. Thank you all for your prayers; lives are changed because of your investment.

Haiti: It's pain and needs are deeply embedded in my heart, but as I've asked God countless times over the last several months I haven't heard Him direct me with any specific, next steps. I don't want to move ahead of Him, so I will continue to pray and wait. I know there is more He has for me to do in Haiti and I believe much more for our base to get involved with. Berna, one of the Haitian twin brothers I've written about previously, did complete a Discipleship Training School in Port au Prince last summer and did his outreach portion in Benin, Africa. He graduated in November and is a changed person. I wrote in more detail about this on the Hands & Feet for Haiti Facebook page and I would encourage you to read more about it!

If you would like to send a donation or support me monthly you may send it to: Veronica Thompson, 501 Blacktail Rd., Lakeside MT 59922. Make checks payable to "YWAM" (please do not include my name on the check in order to receive tax deduction). If you would like to learn more about YWAM Montana, please visit our website at www.ywamontana.org.