

ROCHESTER YOUTH OUTREACH

March 2007

Dear Friends,

Several Thursdays ago, our team of volunteers decided to introduce a devotional by asking this question; "What is your purpose in life?" As we listened to various responses, which varied from "I have no idea" to "Have fun", to "Obey God", one of our littlest members became more and more restless. By the time we called on her she was practically bouncing out of her favorite volunteer's lap. We then asked her, not knowing what to expect:

"Okay, Brooklyn, what is your purpose in life?"

"To live for Jesus and party all night long!" came the response.

The entire room simultaneously erupted in laughter and awe. We were so impressed by what this 6 year old has to say about her best friend Jesus, that it has become our new battle cry for the ministry! Even now, as we think of it, the smiles creep across our faces. It reminds us of what the Psalmist must have meant when he said:

"You have taught children and nursing infants to give you praise." – Psalm 8:2

These past weeks have been very fruitful, and there have been huge advances with the youth as they begin to trust us more and more. We have seen many open their hearts and lives before us. With much blessing and growth from God, there seems to also come much opposition and trial. Several weeks ago, we began to feel the weight of discouragement due to the heavy burden we see before us each week. We saw so many needs; so many kids facing so many trials and we felt inadequate to meet each need for every child. This persisted for a few weeks, and was difficult to overcome. God is so faithful, and we put our trust in Him to help us. After the inner struggles subsided, external ones soon took over. Week after week the poor, unsuspecting building fell victim to Murphy's Law. Initially, the sink fell and the plumbing broke. The next week we learned how to patch a wall, due to a large hole in the dry wall from a falling volunteer. The following week we befriended the neighborhood hardware store owner after a window broke. Soon thereafter (the same day) the wall took another beating, this time a significantly larger one. Finally, last week a snowball took the life of another window. These damages to the building have tested our faith, patience, and finances. It is clear that we need a separate facility that the youth can use for physical activity as an outlet for their surplus of energy.

We are so grateful for the Morehouses, who have exhibited Christ-like grace concerning these issues, and for the staff of His Branches - there is nothing like a smile and a kind word on a rough day! ☺ They have all been such a blessing to us!

We are also especially grateful for those who have shared with us financially in recent weeks. When things started breaking we were extremely concerned about being able to fix everything. We see God's faithfulness and provision through the generous donation of family and friends (Opening a note to find a check and a window breaking within minutes of each other...coincidence? I think not). Also, members of Jess's family who have so generously provided food each week have been such an incredible blessing to us. ☺ Thanks everyone!

We are so privileged to work with these kids. It is amazing the breakthroughs we have seen. As the kids are loved and invested in, we get to see their hard exteriors begin to peel away and they become kids once again. There is nothing worse than a child who is forced to grow up before their time due to circumstances they have been placed in, but here they are able to let it all go and be themselves. Bad behaviors are decreasing exponentially, and our hearts melt as we begin to see they are just enjoying spending time with us. It is so awesome to see the special bonds that volunteers have with the kids. The littlest ones, especially, who just love to be held and played with are adjusting quite well. Cuss words are becoming rarer, and please and thank you's more common. We have had the chance to see the oldest ones begin to lead without being asked; helping to calm the younger ones down and serving dinner to all, as well as admonishing their bad behaviors.

A few weeks ago when I (Jess) asked one of our kids to pray with me before dinner (not thinking he would), I was shocked to hear his response. "Yeah, I'll pray with you, but you have to stand up and pray. That's how we do it." His desire to show respect for the Lord by standing fueled the fire to keep the work going.

These kids have so much to offer. They are beautiful, talented and smart. They are innovative (which sometimes takes the form of sneaky ☺) and bright, and they respond so well to love; especially tough love. If only we could bring everyone in and show them the before and after of our kids. If only it were possible to express in words the leaps and bounds they have taken in the past months. These kids have so very much to offer, if only they are given a fighting chance to rise above their surroundings. They are great kids, and they are our friends. ☺

Please pray for the kids with the hardest of exteriors, whom we have yet to crack with our God's awesome love. We need patience and added love with them, and sometimes it is hard to remember that. As always, thank you so much for taking the time to read about God's ministry to the youth of the 19th ward. We are honored to have you stand with us in prayerful support! ☺

Blessings and Love to you!

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We need your help!

- Please pray for us, the kids, the ministry, and our partners in work here at His Branches.
- PLEASE COME HELP ☺ We have a tremendous amount of wonderful kids, who desire your love, and would greatly benefit from knowing you! If you have a gift that we haven't talked about, we are eager to talk to you. Call or email us!
- Financial or material contributions, if you feel so led!
 - Food and drink: We serve dinner and snacks so anything along these lines would be greatly appreciated!
 - For financial contributions make checks payable to: "His Branches, Inc." and write "Rochester Youth Outreach" in the memo section.

Send to: His Branches, Inc.
340 Arnett Blvd.
Rochester, NY 14619

Donations are tax-deductible, and receipts are available upon request.



A few of the kids we serve each Thursday ☺