



From the Heart of Youth Ministry

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Youth Beat

From a Youth Pastor's Heart: Courtney's Calling

On a typical week, I can usually expect to get at least one phone call from Courtney, and sometimes 2 or 3. The one I expect almost every Thursday is the usual "Tara, can you pick me up for BreakAway tonight?" But if the name Courtney shows up on my cell phone an extra day during the week, it's hard to tell what it might be about. But it usually has to do with some new idea.

"Tara, could Sadie and I perform a song for the café, if we practiced?"

"Is it okay if I invite another friend to come to the activity this week?"

"Can you get me the recipe for that snack we made last week? I want to make some for my family." (That's the call Jan gets!)

About a month ago, my out-of-the-blue "Courtney call" began something like this: "Tara, do you think we could have a bake sale after church sometime? Like to raise money for something... something the church needs, or like last year when we bought Christmas presents for poor kids? I started making lists of things we could make to sell."

I told her I'd run the idea past the rest of the Break-Away leaders, and if she was really looking to take some

leadership in such a project, we could probably make it happen.

The evening that we scheduled as a BreakAway Bake-a-thon, Courtney was as dedicated as a 13-year-old girl can be, scraping out pumpkin pulp and measuring bread ingredients. She was quick to remind the other kids, if they asked what we were making stuff for, that it was "to raise money for



poor kids so that they can have Christmas presents." And Jan noticed Courtney's gratitude at one point in the night when she said sincerely, "Thanks for doing this!" Who knows how often she's experienced adults taking a kid's idea seriously enough to follow through?

But that's exactly what she experienced last Sunday, when she got to see her own idea become reality as people from OMC warmly encouraged her and supported her cause by giving donations and taking home some BreakAway baked goods. I asked her later how she felt about the bake sale. "It was nice how many people made donations," she told me. "It made me feel good that there are people that actually care, and it's really nice that they gave." In the end, Courtney's idea, with OMC's support, raised \$120.41. Courtney was in awe when I gave her the number!

But donations for Christmas gifts are the least of what was given that day. All of you who stopped by that table gave one young teenager an affirmation that she can make a difference in her world, and she doesn't need to wait till she grows up to do it. The results of *that* gift will have a greater value than we'll ever know.

So what will Courtney's next project be? I'm convinced God has a calling on the life of this bold, compassionate girl to change the world in some great way. For now, I look forward to her next phone call.

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Upcoming Youth Ministry Birthdays

Send a card, write a note, and thank God for their lives!

- December 3—Kelli Juersivich, Footprints
- December 5—Nathan Farver, OMC
- December 8—Adriane Farver, OMC

Youth Ministry Staff Receive Important Relational Skills Training

On Saturday, November 17th, the staff of WINGS, BreakAway, and Footprints were privileged to have Darin Nissley, head director of Lighthouse Ministries at First Mennonite Church in Canton, as a guest speaker. Tara had recommended that Darin provide some training for the youth staff in how to more effectively handle difficult situations that might arise when working with children and youth who come from rough backgrounds.

During college, Tara had worked 4 years at the Lighthouse, tutoring and building relationships with

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some tough kids in inner-city Canton.

The type of training our youth ministry staff received an overview of is a yearly requirement for the Lighthouse staff. Darin is a certified instructor in The Mandt System® Relational Skills. The basic premise of the Mandt System® is that by learning how to manage your own emotions during a crisis situation, you can help provide safety for others who are not in control of themselves, by helping them to "de-escalate" from a crisis state.

The training includes an understanding of what it takes to build positive, healthy relationships, and the basics of human communication, emotions, and behavior. A quote used to represent the belief of the system's founders states: "In all

situations, it is MY response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a person humanized or dehumanized" (Dr. Haim Ginott). As a youth ministry staff, we have a choice to either *react* to a child's *behavior* (the way they are often dealt with at home and at school), or to *respond* to the *need* that is driving the behavior (how we hope to interact as a ministry of Christ's love).

Jan Kauffman reflects on what she heard at the training:

I wish I would have had all this helpful information way back when...when

we were just starting out with the WINGS program in its early days! ...those were the thoughts going through my head as I listened to Darrin and time and time again thought, "Wow, that really makes sense" or "He's sharing as one who has dealt with the same kinds of issues we have had in WINGS, BreakAway and Footprints." One of the main ideas that impressed me was that the techniques or relational skills he is promoting/encouraging are time intensive and not always the most "efficient" ways of helping children behave and cooperate. I tend to want to be efficient and want the desired result as quickly as possible, but if we are truly going to love the children where they are at, it will take a lot of time, a lot of patience, a lot of follow-up, a lot of listening and connecting with them. I also was struck by a comment that he made about Lighthouse Ministries, saying that

"there are not many places (like the Lighthouse) in the world where you can 'freak out' and still be loved just as you are." Even though kids act out and have bad days, they know they are always welcome to come back another day and still find the love and acceptance they need. I think our WINGS, BreakAway and Footprints ministries are also providing that safe place to belong for kids of all backgrounds and family situations. They are seeing God's unconditional love in practice through their interactions with loving leaders who still love them even though at times they may act badly or say unlovely things. I'm thankful that God has given us this opportunity to make a difference in the lives of kids and their families. ~Jan

Solve the Bulletin Board Mystery!

Hey Kids! Take a good hard look at the WINGS bulletin board with pictures from FallFest. If you come up with the correct answer to the following question, you win a prize!

QUESTION part 1: Why does Tara look so shocked? (Answer found in one of the other pictures! Be creative!). Watch for answer on board and in next issue, along with part 2 of the mystery!

Footprints at Camp Luz Fall Youth Retreat

On Friday, November 9th, 8 Footprints youth arrived at Camp Luz, along with youth from many other Mennonite churches all over Ohio, to attend a weekend packed full of youthful activity. Kate, Kelli, Sylvia, and Han were the returning veterans of last year's youth retreat, with lots of exciting stories to build anticipation for the first-year attendees Greg, Stacey, Meea, and Rebecca.

Rebecca was asked to keep a journal of what she experienced throughout the weekend. Here is some of what she recorded:

Friday Evening: Tonight we did some G.A.G. games (Get Acquainted Games) in order to know one another. Afterwards we had a speaker, Keith Oliver, then we did a lot of square dancing. I mean a lot! *This summary written as she was halfway asleep after all the activities finally ended after midnight Friday night!

Saturday: This morning we had breakfast, and now have P.D.T. (Personal Devotional Time). [Later] Also Keith Oliver had begun to talk about football and how you should listen to God in relation. Keith used the football terms to call the Bible "our own play-book."...Sometimes it requires a little more work to hold onto Jesus and following God's will...Facing a new challenge everyday, if we don't know God's word, then how will we follow in his path? Keith also gave us emergency phone numbers from the Bible, for example when God seems far away, call Psalm 139; feed your faith and doubt will starve to death. We are all called to serve the Lord.

Meea Erb and Pastor Bill complete a "star, circle to the left" during the Friday night fall hoedown.

