

partners

THE CHURCH PLANTING NEWSLETTER OF THE EC CHURCH

Engaging the World for Christ through Community

A few generations ago, churches seemed to have a stronghold in the community. People gathered in sanctuaries for worship services and in fellowship halls for meals and activities. Fast forward to 2015, and the church is competing with many other extracurricular activities. People move in and out of neighborhoods without connecting with a church, and congregations are unsure how to establish a new connection with their neighbors. In this issue of Partners, we will look at ways EC churches are deciding to take action and reach out to people. From hosting movie nights to offering actions and words to show they care, these people of faith are rebuilding the connections in their community

... Kolleen Long, Editor, Partners

Outreach Idea: Tithing Twist

Journey53 (EC Church Plant, Pottstown, PA)

By Kolleen Long

As they planned for 2015, Rick Christman and other leaders of Journey53 issued the "\$150 dollar challenge." "What we've done," Christman explains, "is we've made a challenge this year that we want to give away 10% of our income as a church plant."

Each time their church community meets for Celebration, an individual or family is asked to take \$150 and find a way to connect to someone else in their neighborhood, school or workplace. A woman

took the first challenge, thinking of a single mom she hadn't seen in some time. She decided to buy her a gift card to a local pizza shop, then headed to the grocery store to buy a second card.

"She wasn't even sure if she would get to see her, but as she was buying the card at the grocery store, doesn't this mom's son come to the store," Christman shares. She made arrangements with the son to go visit the woman, and offered the cards as encouragement. The woman

started to cry. "She felt ready to give up on her faith and didn't think anyone cared," Christman says. "Well, I do," her friend said."

The two women started a Life group, meeting regularly on Wednesday nights to study God's Word and grow in their faith together. Another family used their challenge money to help pay for a rental car for an individual they knew. Through this act, they've started meeting with her for meals and have built a relationship.

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"It's really cool stuff like that. It's the pay it forward idea, pay it forward with a purpose: the connection and the relationship we hope that comes out of helping people," he concludes.

Christman and his family took the challenge one month. When their daughter mentioned members of her school choir group stayed after school for practice and were hungry, the family bought a tray of soft pretzels and presented it to the group, saying simply, "Just to let you know that we care. Here. Enjoy!"

They also used their challenge money to connect with the man who helps take care of the property where Journey53 meets. "We've been trying to make a connection with him," Christman says, and

through conversation they learned his wife was traveling regularly to a hospital to visit a stepson, often skipping meals to make the drive.

The Christmans gave the couple a gift card. "We didn't want her to be hungry or for him to worry about his wife," Christman notes, "so we said, 'Use it for gas, for food, for whatever. And we want you to know we're praying for you and for [your family.] We want to show we care.'"

"And that's our goal," Christman confirms. "We call it giving with a purpose, serving with a purpose. The challenge opens the door to build a relationship."

Just a few weeks into the challenge, Christman and all of Journey53 are excited about the possibilities. "We're going to do it

through Easter and see how it goes," he says. "But the stories coming in so far are really amazing."

To date, no one has spent the entire \$150, which he points out comes from the church budget, not individual pockets.

"The whole idea isn't about spending that \$150, it's about having the capability of being able to do something cool when the moment presents itself," he says. "It's also giving the church a chance to tithe. The church is tithing just like individuals should."

Journey53 strives to be an Acts 2 church by loving God, loving others and serving the world. For more about this church plant, visit their website (journey53.org) or follow their Facebook page.

PRAYING FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Day of Prayer for Church Planting, the first Sunday of each month

Please pray for our church planters.
Pray for them by name (see the current list of planters).

ASK GOD TO:

- Strengthen each planter for his ministry adventure.
- Encourage each planter with a personal God encounter.
- Nudge each planter closer to his next community connection.
- Direct each planter as he leads his ministry team.

Please pray for our church plants.
Pray for them by name (see the current list of plants).

ASK GOD TO:

- Supply the necessary ministry partners for the planting work.
- Enlarge the ministry team's sphere of community influence.
- Nourish the spirits of the planter, leaders and volunteers.
- Deliver the necessary funds for the work of the ministry.

Currently, we are supporting and/or encouraging . . .

6 Planters and 7 Plants

- Ephrata, PA . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
- Harrisburg area, PA . . . Restore Community (Brian Parker)
- Lehigh Valley, PA . . . Horizon (Bud Daneker)
- Philadelphia, PA . . . Comunidad Biblica (Rolando Diaz)
 - Allentown, PA . . . a second location
- Pottstown area, PA . . . Journey53 (Rick Christman)
- York, PA . . . Iglesia Cristiana (Carlos Kelly)

2 Restarts / Revitalizations

- Slatington, PA . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)
- Tallmadge, OH . . . New Direction (Tim Ream)

2 Informal Partnerships / 4 Missional Works / 0 Potential Adoptions

- Lancaster, PA . . . Iglesia De Dios Ven A El (Luis Ramirez)
- Millersville, PA . . . The Gathering (Juan Carlos Morales)
- Palmerton, PA . . . Gaming Grotto (Chris Bronico)
- Reedsville, PA . . . LifeTree Café (Jeff Byerly)
- Sinking Spring & Mohn's Hill, PA . . . Two Lifetree Cafés (Jerry Artz, Mohn's Hill & Mike Snedeker, Sinking Spring)
 - "Off the Avenue" and "Canal Street"



Outreach Idea: Summer Movie Night

Horizon (EC Church Plant, Lehigh Valley, PA)

By Kolleen Long

When they bought their present building, located at the corner of South and Ott Streets in Allentown, in 2013, Horizon's leaders wanted to connect with their neighbors.

"We sought to host several free events for our neighborhood and community in attempt to draw them in to Horizon in a non-Sunday church service setting," Andrea Conye, a member of Horizon says. "Previously the church was occupied by a small congregation that was a mostly elderly crowd. Our goal was to appeal to families, especially children."

Movie Night was born from this goal to reach out to young families. Those who attend this free summer activity are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets to watch a current, family-friendly film like The Lego Movie or Up.

"They're always geared toward kids," Pastor Bud Daneker explains. "We've found it's a whole lot easier to get parents to bring their kids to something than to get parents to come to something for themselves."

Snacks are available for a low cost, with proceeds going toward a clear cause. "We sell popcorn, candy bars, things like that for \$1," Daneker says. "And we announce it's going for a project [such as] the mission we support in Ghana."

Conye, who has attended Horizon for about 5 years, is part of the team

of people who plan and set up Movie Nights. "We try to take turns 'managing' an event," she explains, "having one point person, so it's less overwhelming."

Set up is simple, using a projector (donated by a local company) and portable sound system. The first year of the summer movies, the church built a large screen from wood. They later replaced this with a large blow-up screen, available for purchase in many big-box stores and donated by a member.

In 2015, Conye shares, they hope to do earlier advertising and pick a trilogy or series of movies to show through the summer. (It's important to note that the church uses movies covered by their CLVI license.)

Horizon announces upcoming Movie Nights on local radio and newspapers. They mail out flyers and also have a large banner they put on the corner of their property announcing the movie date and film to be shown. And it's bringing in new faces.

"Attendance has been, I would say, 70 people at least," Daneker says. "It generates a lot of attention. We notice people drive by, park their cars, and watch from the street."

Key to their success, Conye says, is having a clear vision. "We targeted kids, choosing events that appealed to them, which they would need parents to bring them to," she says. "This has

been very successful as parents really seem to appreciate a church especially with free events. Once at Horizon, they see how loving our church is and we've gained several members as a result."

It's just one way Horizon has worked to intentionally interact with neighbors. Conye explains, "We really developed a robust outreach schedule - movie night, Vacation Bible School, block party, Easter Egg Drop, Halloween Light the Night, Holly Jolly Funfest - by working together

and sharing ideas, discussing feasibility and stepping up to volunteer to make things happen. It was a lot of work but we believed in our vision and wanted to see our community be reached and loved by our church."

"Our events seem to be drawing people hungry for community, fellowship and Jesus," she says. "Sometimes people are scared to experience these in a church setting so we aim to offer them in a fun way that seems to be effective."

"I walk to the church," Daneker says, "and I've had probably had 50 people in the last two years stop me and thank me for the stuff we do. We've had people come on a Sunday and say, 'I go to another church, but I wanted to come one time and thank you for what you do in the community.' It taught me that you really can change the impression in a relatively short period of time."

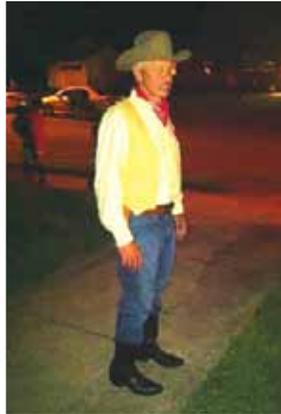
“ Our events seem to be drawing people hungry for community, fellowship and Jesus... ”

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“We talked about what we needed to do to get the neighborhood knowing who we are and changing the image of this church. Otherwise, people will just keep driving by.”

Horizon Church, serving the Lehigh Valley area, endorses living a better life through healthy relationships, reaching out and the transformation found from following Christ. For more about this church and its outreaches, browse their website: horizonconnect.org.



If You Screen It, They Will Come. Members of Horizon Church, Allentown, have found that showing family-friendly flicks in a comfortable, outdoor environment is a great way to draw the neighborhood into their church community. The church plant has shown a variety of films, including Pixar's Toy Story, on warm summer evenings. A banner announces upcoming movies, simple refreshments are sold to benefit a good cause, and plenty of church members are on hand to welcome friends and newcomers. Sometimes, even a character from a movie shows up to help little ones feel at home.



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 A PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH PLANTING COMMISSION
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