



DIFFERENCE MAKERS

How volunteers make our
ministries possible

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Presence-Centered Parenting and Caregiving

This past fall, we received exciting news we believe will significantly deepen the impact of Youthfront ministries on thousands of families we have the privilege of serving. We learned that Youthfront was selected as a recipient of a four-year grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. for a project designed to help parents and caregivers actively participate in the Christian formation of their children.

The principal aim of Lilly Endowment's grantmaking in religion is to deepen and enrich the lives of American Christians, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities. We're humbled and blessed to be selected for this grant project in their focus area of Christian Parenting and Caregiving.

Over this last summer, our staff undertook significant research in a planning grant for this project, also funded by Lilly Endowment, and I want to thank all of you who participated in that work. We met with parents, grandparents and caregivers across our ministry areas to hear their hopes and their needs to support the faith journey of the children in their care. Children's pastors, ministry leaders and volunteers helped us understand how we might better support churches in their work with parents, children and families. Focus groups and surveys with children and teenagers across our ministry helped frame what faith practices and experiences are shaping them.

Thanks to all of you who gave of your time and shared your stories, hopes and dreams for your kids and grandkids with us. We are excited to mine Youthfront's depth of experiences, programs and practices to produce and share resources to help parents, caregivers and congregations engage their children in spiritual formation through classic Christian practices. The project, which we are calling Presence-Centered Parenting and Caregiving, will expand YF Family as a laboratory and launchpad. We'll be rolling out tools and resources in the coming weeks, months and years that will be the outcome of our extensive partnerships with churches as well as our large footprint of parents and families connected to Youthfront.

Read more about the specific upcoming projects and our partners on page 3 of this issue. We're excited to get to do this long-term work with a wide range of partners, and we look forward to involving you and keeping you updated on this important initiative in the life of our ministry.

Mike King, President and CEO

NEW AT YOUTHFRONT

Support for Parents and Families

Youthfront's four-year project funded through Lilly Endowment's Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative is focused on helping parents and families actively engage in the Christian formation of their children.

The initiative will produce resources to help parents, caregivers and congregations engage their children in spiritual formation through classic Christian practices. New tools and resources for families and churches will be developed over the coming years that will leverage YF Family as well as a team of internal and external experts on the grant's creative resource team.

Goals this year include specific faith formation activities and content for families through the Youthfront app and a new companion activities journal for families of Youthfront Day Campers. Read more in the next issue of YF News about our project team partners helping on the initiative, new resources coming soon and opportunities to get involved.

Thanks to our sponsors!

A festive thank you to all the sponsors and donors who made Christmas at Camp 2022 a successful event! Deep appreciation to our Christmas at Camp North Pole Presenting Underwriters: Shelley and Rod Brenneman, the Burbridge Family Foundation, and the Reinhardt Family/Zephyr Products - and to our Let It Snow Sponsors: Tigris Specialty Construction, and the King Family Fund. Mark your calendar for next year's event: Dec. 1-2 & 8-9, 2023, at Youthfront Camp West.

We're Growing!

Youthfront has several openings for fulltime as well as summer staff positions and internships. Visit youthfront.com/careers to learn more.

New Faces at Youthfront

Youthfront welcomed the following new staff since the last issue of Youthfront News in November: Jason Beruan, Youthfront Camp West Facilities Manager; Haley Majernik, Project Associate Lead for Youthfront's Presence-Centered Parenting and Caregiving initiative; Amanda Shepherd, Program Coordinator at Camp West; and Ellie Stanley, Associate Director of High School Ministries (pictured left to right).





Camp volunteer Michelle Lawson poses with Cabin Leader Natalie Shannon and the campers from their cabin (left). Lawson bonded with Cabin Leader Supervisor Sofia O'Neil during a session of camp (below).



Difference makers

Youthfront's ministries all count on volunteers - from packing and distributing meals through Something to Eat™ to afterschool or summer camp programs. It takes more than a dozen caring adult volunteers just to make a session of overnight camp at Youthfront possible.

What happens when you sign up to be a volunteer? Like veteran Youthfront volunteer Michelle Lawson found, it might just capture your heart.

Michelle Lawson's connection to Youthfront began when her now-grown sons were campers. She remembers how one summer, her younger son wanted to go back to Youthfront for another session so badly that he worked and saved his own money to help pay for a second week at camp.

"Youthfront has impacted my family tremendously," Lawson said. "It's an opportunity for them to get away from

normal life and dig into God – but in such a fun environment. My kids have had great relationships with their Cabin Leaders, Teen Staff friends, and staff members, and they get to see how God can be present in people's real lives."

As her kids went on to serve as both Teen Staff and Summer Staff, Lawson found she enjoyed volunteering at camp. And she didn't stop there. She's served as an overnight Volunteer Cabin

Leader at Camp West multiple times, as a Day Camp Volunteer at Camp LaCygne, and she and her family have packed meals together for Youthfront's Something to Eat™ program. The meal packing ministry has a special place in her heart today, she says, but it all began by volunteering while her sons were involved at camp.

"At camp as a Volunteer Cabin Leader, I get to walk alongside full-time Cabin

Leaders as they take the lead. I get to know the campers, hang out with them during free time, do different activities with them," she said.

"I've seen parents, grandparents, and college kids volunteering. Anybody could serve at camp. You don't have to have any special skills – you just follow a young person who's passionate about Christ and passionate about this ministry. It's amazing to watch these Cabin Leaders pour into their campers. That's what my family experienced."



Day Camp Volunteer Sarah Laptad takes some laps on the lake with Day Campers (left). College student and Volunteer Cabin Leader John Stewart and a Middle School Camper are all smiles during their sunny session of camp (above).



To learn more about being a summer Camp volunteer, visit youthfront.com/serve-at-camp/camp-volunteer.

Nike Lends a Hand

Youthfront's afterschool program in the under-resourced neighborhood of Argentine (Kansas City, KS) has been in high demand. Week by week as the numbers grew, lead staff Amber Booth hoped to have enough adult volunteers to meet the need.

When the Nike store on the Country Club Plaza contacted her to ask if their employees could help, it couldn't have come at a better time.

"It was so exciting to know we'd have a group of consistent volunteers to help work with the kids each week,"

Booth said. "To have a company or organization 'adopt' us as their volunteer outlet for their employees has been such a blessing."

Each week, Nike employees join Booth and other staff to provide games and activities to the elementary school children in the program, which is a safe space for kids after school.

"There are so many kids who want to attend, and we can't safely expand our enrollment without volunteer help," Booth said.



To learn more about this and other Youthfront volunteer opportunities for companies, churches and families, visit youthfront.com/volunteer.



SACRED SPACES

What happens at Youthfront when the last campers of the summer leave? If you envision a sad, lonely place - don't worry: The cabins don't sit empty long! Churches, schools and other groups use Youthfront Camp West and Camp LaCygne the rest of the year.

“We felt very loved and cared for”

While large youth group weekend retreats are popular uses of camp in the offseason, the facilities also attract churches, scout groups and schools hosting smaller women's or men's retreats, leadership retreats or family weekends. Hosting meaningful experiences for groups is central to Youthfront's mission as a church-assisting organization.

“Youthfront's care and communication for retreat groups is top shelf,” said Garrett Lahey, pastor at Lakeland Community Church in Lee's Summit, Mo, which hosted a church retreat at Youthfront in August. “We felt very loved and cared for, and the staff is so friendly and accommodating. It feels just like working with a fulltime retreat venue.”

Camp LaCygne is situated on 600+ wooded acres in LaCygne, KS, and Camp West in Edgerton, KS, is nestled on more than 150 acres. Fall and winter can be perfect times to hike the trails, warm up by a bonfire or sit peacefully by the lake with a book or Scripture. The grounds of both camps come to life in the spring making it an ideal venue for nature lovers.

Youthfront hosted 23 different churches and groups at its camps August through November 2022 and is slated to host more than a dozen groups this spring.



Facility Features

Youthfront offers a variety of overnight accommodations, gathering spaces and onsite attractions that meet the needs of groups of all sizes.

Camp West

West's spacious Activity Center includes a Retreat Center on the lower level, complete with large meeting area and fully-equipped kitchen. This level is a great space for groups of 50-70 people. In addition to this space, the lower level of the Chapel will accommodate groups of 50 or less.

Chapel facilities accommodate up to 400 people as a main meeting space. The lower level can be used as a second Retreat Center space for groups and includes two large bunk rooms, leader groups, a meeting space, prayer room, and fully equipped kitchen. Cabins are air conditioned and heated for each season and each have 18 beds including a leader room with a private bathroom. The Activity Center has a Snack Shop and Game Room (pool, ping pong, foosball, air hockey, etc.) and is a perfect space for hanging out and playing games.

Camp LaCygne

This camp sits on 600+ acres of gorgeous fields, forest and trails. Cabins are situated beside our lake with the dining hall, chapel, game room, and Snack Shack just a short distance away. Most of our air-conditioned, single story cabins are tiled and have an open layout with one large room and bunkbeds for up to 20 guests. A few cabins are split into bedrooms with space for up to 16 guests.

Camp LaCygne has tons of fun activities including the pool, waterslide, sand volleyball courts, basketball court, indoor climbing wall, and tons of other indoor games in the game room and Snack Shack. The Prayer Chapel is an ideal spot for personal quiet time and prayer, and there are multiple spaces on the grounds for hiking and reflection.

Learn more about Youthfront's retreat facilities at youthfront.com/retreats.



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