

Imagine

YOUTHFRONT NEWS
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"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!"

Ephesians 3:20-21

IMAGINE

The world is big. It's hard to imagine any change with so many factors against us. Bullying gets more prevalent. Kids are hungry—1 in 6 in our own city. Our students are feeling pain and isolation and wrestling with questions about their identity. *What if I don't have friends? Where will I go to school? How will I get my next meal? Will my dad find a job again? Will my mom get off work early tonight?*

Now, Imagine...

Imagine a city strong. A united city, working together, for each other. A city of leaders of all ages making a difference and taking a stand against violence, anger, and hate. Communities working together to make our city better. **Imagine** kindness. When we no longer have to combat bullying, cyber-hate, and discrimination. When our children are not afraid of their peers, but can gather around one another united. **Imagine** a time when we feel secure. Secure in our own skin. Secure in our jobs, in our families. Secure in the eyes of a loving God. **Imagine** love in a way never felt before, when we can truly accept the love of our God as it comes crashing down among us, through us.

It is our dream to participate for another 75 years in a greater story. In a story that results in no more bullying, no more loneliness, and no more hate or anger. A time when no one feels left out and our youth and adults alike

practice hospitality and generosity. We want to work with city leaders to strengthen our communities and fuel acceptance despite difference. We want to provide opportunities for our youth, of all socioeconomic backgrounds, to be able to participate in Youthfront programs. We want to work with businesses in Kansas City to offer leadership to the youth of today.

We don't know what all that looks like exactly, but we know we need YOU to **join the impact**. Help us make a difference!

Participate. There are so many ways to help get involved. We need volunteers. We need campers. We need partners. We need you.
www.youthfront.com/participate

Donate. Time is in shortage. We get that. Sometimes it isn't easy to give of your time. In order to continue our mission for another 75 years, we need resources. Donate today.
www.youthfront.com/donate

Advocate. Help us spread the word. In the months to come, we will share some important content with you all. We hope you will help us by sharing our stories and inviting others to participate in this mission.
Follow @Youthfront on social media.

BILLY GRAHAM & YOUTHFRONT

I'm writing this as I watch the funeral of Billy Graham. Billy Graham has been an important part of my life because Billy Graham has been an important part of the history of Youthfront, aka Kansas City Youth for Christ. This year, Youthfront is celebrating its 75th Anniversary. How interesting that in the midst of observing our 75th Anniversary, we are also experiencing the death of Billy Graham.

Our founder, Al Metsker, and his wife, Vidy, started a uniquely-focused ministry to young people in 1943. Before long, they connected with other youth ministry leaders around the country doing something very similar. They began meeting together and started Youth for Christ. Within a couple of years, they hired a passionate young evangelist named Billy Graham to help spread the message of Jesus Christ and Youth for Christ around the country. Billy Graham became a fan of our ministry here in Kansas City.

My first encounter with Billy Graham was in 1967 when he held a crusade at Municipal Stadium in Kansas City. My parents, although not consistent churchgoers at the time, took my three sisters and me to the crusade. I was absolutely thrilled. I wish I could tell you that my enthusiasm, as a 10-year-old boy, was for the spiritual experience I was having. My memory is so clear on that experience of a Billy Graham Crusade because I actually got to sit on the field where my beloved Kansas City Athletics played baseball.

Seven years later, partly through the ministry of Kansas City Youth for Christ, I had decided to surrender my life to Jesus Christ and serve him. I started working part-time at KCYFC while going to college and I never quit. I soon learned of Billy Graham's connection to our organization and in 1978, when Billy returned to hold another crusade in Kansas City, my mentor, Al Metsker, took me to meet him. I admired Billy Graham because of his passion for Jesus Christ. I share that passion and obsession for Jesus. For 75 years, Youthfront has carried on the mission *to bring youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ*. Billy's core message focused on *Jesus Christ is the way,*



the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. In Him is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Undoubtedly, Billy Graham played a big role in shaping Youthfront's DNA.

In 2004, a year after I became President/CEO of Youthfront, Billy returned to Kansas City for one of his last Crusades. He chose Kansas City because of his fondness of our city, largely initiated through his historical connection with Youthfront, aka Kansas City Youth for Christ. I was so happy that I was able to bring my family to the Crusade, held at Arrowhead Stadium, much like my parents had brought my sisters and me to experience Billy Graham. It was amazing to hear Billy preach again in public and share testimony of his relationship to KCYFC (Youthfront) and our founders, Al and Vidy Metsker.

What I have most deeply admired about Billy was his willingness to change, adapt, and grow throughout his life. I admired that he was willing to face criticism from his fellow Evangelicals for standing up for Dr. Martin Luther King, even bailing King out of jail after he had been jailed for a demonstration. Billy insisted on racial integration at his crusades at a time when most other religious leaders were still silent on these issues. I admired Billy because he invited Catholic leaders, a broad variety of Protestant leaders, and Eastern Orthodox leaders to participate in ministry together. Once again, some of his biggest critics were other evangelical leaders. Billy declared, "The number one problem in our world is alienation, rich versus poor, black versus white, labor versus management, conservative versus liberal, East versus West...But Christ came to bring about reconciliation and peace."

I also believe that if Billy were able to speak his own opinions to us now, he would have much to say about what is happening in our country today. The mixture of Christianity with political agendas of either the left or right, which adds to the overall divisiveness among people in our culture, is a big mistake. In a 1993 article in Time Magazine entitled "God's Billy Pulpit," Billy declared that Jesus did not have a political party. Jonathan Merritt wrote an article for the New York Times after Billy's death, remembering his visit with Billy several years ago. Merritt asked him about his ability to connect with all people by avoiding partisan politics. Graham declared, "Evangelists cannot be closely identified with any particular party or person. We have to stand in the middle in order to preach to all people, right and left. I haven't been faithful to my own advice in the past. I will be in the future."

Youthfront desires to stay true to the message of Jesus, being gracious to all and avoiding an unhealthy mix of Christianity and partisan politics. Our first allegiance is to God's Kingdom and the desire to focus on what it means to follow God in the way of Jesus Christ.

I have also admired the reality that Billy Graham, while acknowledging that he made many mistakes in his life, lived a life without even the hint of a scandal. Billy loved Jesus. Billy loved people, all people, reminding us that God loved Chinese people, African people, etc. as much as he loved American people.

"Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion - it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ."

Although Billy is known for leading millions of people to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ, he reminded us, "Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion - it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ." This affirms our mission here at Youthfront *to bring youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ*. We are thankful for our heritage and will continue to faithfully embrace the legacy of

youth ministry that God has given us. We are so thankful that you have chosen to be a part of this amazing story and journey with us. To God be the Glory!



Al Metsker

DONATE

It's not every day that a nonprofit ministry celebrates its 75th anniversary. We are so proud to have been around for seven and a half decades! We are continuing our aggressive campaign to raise some serious funds. Please prayerfully consider joining the impact for another 75 years by contributing in one of these ways:

- \$75 monthly
- \$100 monthly
- \$750 monthly
- \$75,000 annually



Visit www.youthfront.com/donate or return the enclosed envelope to donate.

WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO?

Though many of our programs are associated with a charge, those charges do not fully cover our costs. Camp doesn't pay for itself. Something to Eat doesn't pay for itself. Without your support, less people get fed through Something to Eat. Camp renovations don't happen. Work environments can't get necessary upgrades. Kids don't get financial aid to attend camp or Teen Staff. By contributing to Youthfront monthly as a whole, you will be helping us better our organization and make a wider impact in the years to come.

We have said it all year: we have grown quickly. Growing pains means more needed resources. We are all working at maximum capacity due to limited staffing resources. More needed resources mean more needed money. Our staff ARE our programs. It's the staff member who sits and listens to the teenager navigate body image; it's the staff member who hears the same knock-knock joke from the day camper for the 12th time, but STILL laughs at it; it's the staff mem-

ber who cries with the middle schooler who feels lonely at school. Our staff are our programs because these interactions show the love of Christ. We want to be an organizational leader in this city, cultivating other leaders in this city. We want to provide safe places for our teens to develop leadership skills and to experience the abundance of love pouring down on them by God and those around them. It is then, we mobilize our youth for change. We create warriors in the midst of tragedy and kindness where there is hate.

We cannot stress it enough: we cannot do this without your giving. Please consider making an impact this year with us. We promise to be good resources of your funding and are asking you to trust us with your donation. We are asking you to be a part of us. We are asking you to enter into deeper relationship with us, get to know us better, and see more of the impact of your funding.

You will not be disappointed.



MAKING PROGRESS

Construction continues on our new offices located at 4600 Rainbow Boulevard. Decorative glass windows will be installed soon in the prayer chapel. Drive by and watch it all come together over the next few months!



A big thank you to the **Sunderland Foundation** for their generous donation to the Creative Wing of this building!

If you would like to help offset the cost of this workspace, please go to www.youthfront.com/donate.

EVENTS

YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS

JUNE 30

Reunion at Youthfront Camp West for alumni involved with Youthfront (Kansas City Youth For Christ) **prior to 1990**. More info here: www.youthfront.com/75threunion

OCTOBER 13

Imagine Gala (formerly known as Diamonds and Denim) at the Madrid Theater. **Don't miss this!** More info here: www.youthfront.com/Imagine75



We will announce more 75th Anniversary events over the next several months. Stay tuned!



4715 Rainbow Blvd, Shawnee Mission, KS 66205



“I think camp puts into perspective what’s important. It removes you from all of the stresses and anxieties that you have just living with all of the technology and things that we fill up our lives to distract us from God. I just feel like coming back here, it’s a retreat; you’re able to refocus your eyes on all of the things that are eternal, instead of all of the things that really don’t matter in life. It just kind of helps set your priorities back in line.”

Nikki Kathcart

Volunteer Cabin Leader at Youthfront Camp LaCygne

Read the rest of Nikki’s story at www.youthfront.com/blog

#storiesofyouthfront