

W I N T E R CHILDREN'S LEADER 2 0 0 6

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION



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RAINBOWS Helps Grieving Children

"I will never forget the tear-streaked faces of two teen-age stepbrothers," remembers Shirley Tate. "That weekend their alcoholic stepfather had stormed out of the house and their lives. He was the only dad they had known, the sole support for them and their mom. The loss overwhelmed their emotions, and they feared for their future. As our church school family sang 'Father, I can call You Father' for morning worship, I excused the boys to the restroom, where they could let their tears fall freely."

This was only the most graphic example of the tragedy of broken homes that the majority of Shirley's students were living with. They, like 70 percent of American children, are growing up in a non-traditional home. Their sense of loss, pain, and anger wreak havoc with healthy social development, often rendering them incapable of trusting relationships. How can they find healing?

Rainbows provides an answer. Rainbows is a program of small group, peer-support ministry for children grieving a loss in their family, resulting from death, divorce, parental imprisonment, or drug abuse. Over the last 27 years,

Rainbows has grown into the largest grief support network in the world, with over 8,900 sites world wide. Tate discovered Rainbows at the January 2005 NAD Church Ministries Convention, and knew it could meet a desperate need.

Mountain View conference president Kingsley Whitsett and conference secretary Larry Boggess embraced the ministry after seeing a Rainbows presentation, "I Need Somebody." They encouraged Tate to begin recruiting in the churches of Mountain View conference. Boggess himself enthusiastically volunteered to be coordinator for the Parkersburg Church Rainbows site. Mountain View members responded enthusiastically. Soon 44 volunteers from eight sites converged on Camp Valley Vista, where Jackie Bishop, children's pastor at the Loma Linda University church and a certified trainer for the Rainbows program, led coordinator and facilitator training.

Ohio Conference president Raj Attiken and vice president Hubert Cisneros likewise envisioned Rainbows sites as an innovative outreach enabling churches to make friends in the community.

They both attended Ohio's first Rainbows Facilitator Training event at Worthington, November 6 and Daytona, January 15. Across the division, 13 Rainbows sites are now trained and either well into the program or ready to go.

When an article about Rainbows, submitted by Tate, appeared in the *Parkersburg* [West Virginia] *News* a mother called the church. Her son had seen his father die, and two siblings leave for war, in the same week. She was so thankful to find a place of healing for him. Numerous parents yearn for just such a ministry for their children.

Rona Smith, Rainbows Coordinator for Community

Praise Center in Alexandria, Virginia, tells of a child at her school who recently lost a parent. Smith recommended Rainbows to the child's uncle; the child was one of the first to enroll. "Now every time I see that uncle he thanks me for the wonderful change in his niece," Smith reports.

Rainbows' requirements are simple. Each site must have 4-6 adults over age 21 who can attend a 6-hour facilitators' training event, and a coordinator who can train for an additional 3 hours. The Rainbows program is held weekly for 13 weeks, usually each semester, or 6 weeks before the holidays and 6 weeks after. Groups are limited to no more than 5 chil-

dren per facilitator and last from 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the age of the children. The start-up cost for Rainbows, usually \$750, is \$500 through the North American Division. This covers facilitator guides and materials for 25 students, five per age level. Training is available each fall through the Children's Ministries Department or through the Rainbows organization.

If your church sees Rainbows as a ministry outreach they want to be involved with, contact ChildrensMinistries@nad.adventist.org. For more information about the Rainbows program go to www.rainbows.org.

Children's Ministry Reports: Putting Your Church in the Picture

How is children's ministries growing in your conference and across North America? From baptisms to Vacation Bible School stats, you'll find answers at www.childmin.com/Resources/Year-end.htm

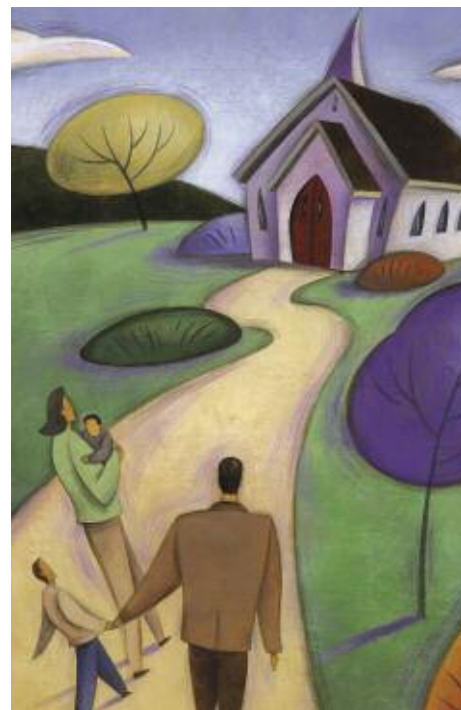
The division relies on year-end reports for a snapshot of ministry to children in North America. Reports help us not only know the good work you've done, but it helps us identify areas we need to concentrate on for the coming year. For 2005 we received reports from all 50 states and most every province, including Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, plus Bermuda. Still, while the 647 churches who reported for 2005 more than doubles the number for any previous year, the figure is only about 12 percent of the approximately 5,000 churches in North America, so our picture could be inaccurate. That's

why we encourage you, whether your church has zero or 100 children attending regularly, to mail in a report or, even simpler and quicker, enter it online at www.childmin.com/Resources/Year-end.htm

Be sure to jot—or type—us a note about what's going well or poorly for your church, whether it's that 75 percent of children attending your VBS were non-Adventist or that the average age of your congregation is age 73?

The annual VBS reports bring us essential information. No Adventist program reaches into communities more successfully than Vacation Bible School. Fifty percent of churches told us they conducted Vacation Bible Schools in 2005. The data we received is immensely encouraging. Churches reported the involvement of more

than 9,000 adult volunteers and 4,000 teenagers. More than 45 percent of children attending were not Adventist.



2005 Summer VBS in Review

Kids have always been excited about VBS. Thanks to the new programs available today. And now adult volunteers are overjoyed as well.

The Vacation Bible School reports are always inspiring to read. In church after church we read of unchurched children hearing the gospel, teens involved in ministry, and kids loving every minute. Here are some of the highlights:

- Our leader, Lelia Mercill, is a returned missionary from Tanzania and she had been to the Serengeti. She told mission stories and we collected \$165 for ADRA.—*Hayfork, California.*
- We had a “new shoes and socks” drive for orphaned kids in Africa. The kids loved bringing their purchases. We collected 311 pairs of shoes and 108 pairs of socks in 14 days of VBS.—*Troy, Idaho.*
- Even though we are a small group, we adapted the Serengeti program and all ages loved it. One teenage boy wanted to know if we only did VBS once a year. Once we told him, “Yes,” he said, “Too bad, because it wasn’t boring.”—*Blythe, California.*
- Something that worked this year

was asking church members and their children to invite or bring children to VBS. Our attendance tripled from last year!—

Farmington, New Mexico.

- In our “Fruits of the Sprit” VBS, we had community outreach projects in which two local charities were excited to have VBS kids make items for them to pass out to aging shut-ins and young mothers in crisis.—*Colville, Washington.*
- The water slide was great fun! The exotic reptile display by a local pet center was a hit with everyone.—*Slidell, Louisiana.*
- Going with our VBS theme, “Jerusalem Marketplace,” our local pastor taught the children how to write their names in Hebrew. The marketplace shopkeepers did all the skits on the last day to reinforce Bible points.—*Florence, Oregon.*
- We had many teens that attended, so after placing some with the children, they had enough to form a class. They participated very well and created a skit that was awesome. It worked! They seemed to have been *more* excited about VBS

than the children.

We thought we would have had to turn them around but they got in there and had a wonderful time being wild about God.—

Mobile, Alabama.

- Our bakery shopkeeper in the “Jerusalem Marketplace” VBS was a teenager. He made different whole-wheat types of flat-bread each day. The children loved working with him. Non-member parents felt it was a great program and would like to be helpers next year.—*Meridian, Idaho.*
- Our newly planted church hosted approximately 40 children each night for a cowboy themed VBS. At the finale, the children performed a hoedown for their parents. Everyone enjoyed petting and playing with the farm animals when Uncle Joe’s Rolling Farm visited. In the end, 12 children gave their hearts to God for the first time. The remaining children rededicated themselves to Jesus. Not only did the children learn more about God, but the members were also blessed to be used!—*Pamela Vaughn, New Horizon Fellowship, Mobile AL*

City Park VBS Draws Unchurched Children

By Lahai Allen

Jan Sorge always dreamed of conducting Vacation Bible School in a city park. A secretary in the California public school system, Sorge saw it as an excellent way to reach children who might otherwise never enter a church or learn about Jesus. Eventually she began making plans, and a children’s out-

reach ministry was formed.

Sorge chose Rancho Roundup as her theme for summer 2005, held in Gilbert Macias Park in the city of Merced, California from June 20-24. A total of 42 volunteers helped with everything from registration to teaching to ensuring safety. One staff volunteer drove 100 miles and stayed in a hotel for an entire week to be the registrar.

Because there were no Adventist churches nearby, VBS was a blessing to those who normally wouldn’t have been able to attend. It also witnessed to adults that anybody who really wants to *can* be involved.

The VBS theme emphasized Jesus the Good Shepherd. Kids enjoyed arts and crafts, Bible studies, a puppet show, and acting out

Bible stories. One of the group's favorite stories depicted how Jesus saves. The kids acted out the story of Jesus calming the storm as a narrator told it. Their active participation made the story real to them.

From the green VBS t-shirts

each child wore to the volunteers keeping watch, Sorge made sure that all the bases were covered. Throughout the week, friendships were formed, seeds were sown, and truths about the Good Shepherd were told.

"We may never know this side

of heaven the outcome of our VBS in the park," says Edna Mason, staff photographer. "We were blessed to be able to play a part." Sorge looks forward to doing it again in summer 2006, and hopes to inspire anyone interested in children's outreach ministry.

Has Your Sabbath School Lost its Spark? Here's How to Liven it Up

Q. "How do you make GraceLink work when you are a very small church with not many resources available or a budget to purchase them? We have all the children together and there are only one or two from each age level, including only one junior."
—Charlene.

A. Charlene, I am a big supporter of the GraceLink Sabbath School. A really small church like yours can combine the children through age 9 into one class and use the primary lessons and teacher's guide. Try to add something each week for the very youngest children. But do something special for the junior.

If I were the teacher of one lone junior, here are some of the things that I would try, but not necessarily in this order:

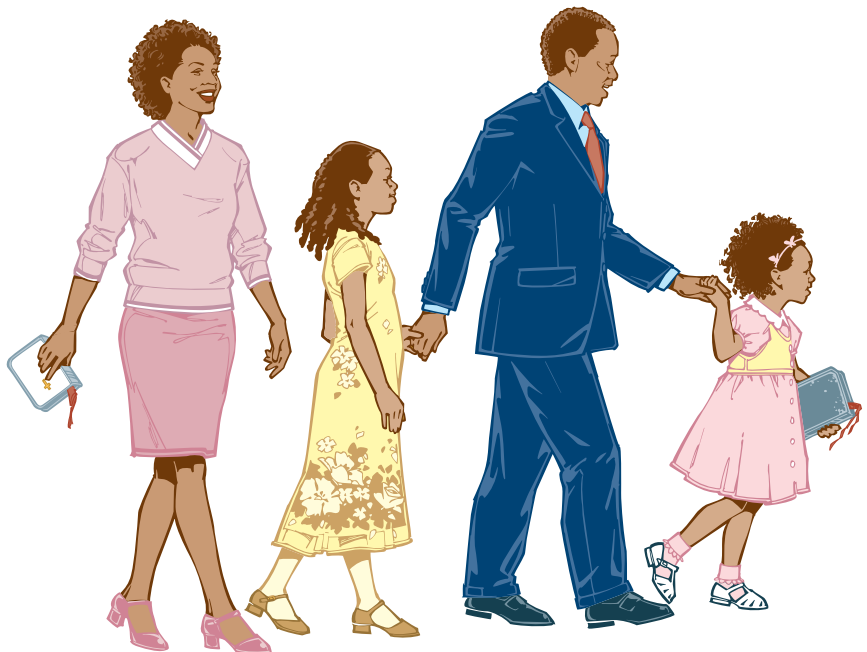
1. Encourage the junior to bring neighborhood friends to Sabbath School. Make sure they have a good time so that they will come back again. Start praying that the Sabbath School will grow and kids will want to come back.
2. Invite the Adult Sabbath School to come in and join you for the first part of Sabbath School. Ask them

ahead of time to be good sports and enter into the activities as any student would. They might be surprised at how much more interesting it is than their regular Sabbath School.

3. Think up some art projects that you and the student can do each week. Make a poster of the Powerpoint or of the memory verse. Make a collage of pictures cut from news magazines that illustrates some idea in the lesson. AdventSource has a new book for primaries, *Creative Bible Learning Activities* for

Sabbath School, that suggests alternative Bible learning activities such as these. You will have no end of ideas to try.

4. Cancel Junior Sabbath School and use the junior to teach younger children in their Sabbath School. Then start a church family potluck where everyone gets to eat together each week, after which the adults stay on to enjoy Junior GraceLink Sabbath School with your lone junior. Give them all the fun activities in full. See if you don't all enjoy it.—Noelene Johnsson



One Teacher's Challenge

Anne-Mae Wollan, Children's Ministries Director of the Trans-European Division, was approached by a church pastor whose Sabbath School leaders wanted to discontinue using the GraceLink Sabbath School curriculum. "What do you advise?" the pastor asked. Anne-Mae offered to conduct a training seminar for the children's leaders in his church.

The night of the seminar, one leader in particular was adamant that GraceLink did not work for her students. She requested to use alternative materials, insisting that while GraceLink may work in other churches, it certainly would never work in hers. Anne-Mae encouraged the woman to hear out her presentation, after which the teacher still insisted GraceLink would not work for her.

"I'll tell you what," Anne-Mae suggested. "Would you do me a favor? Would you teach Sabbath School exactly according to the GraceLink leader-teacher guide

for one month?" Reluctantly the teacher agreed to it; for one month, she would follow the Sabbath School lesson as precisely as possible.

One week later Anne-Mae bumped into the same teacher. "Thank you, thank you!" the woman beamed. "For the first time I feel successful as a teacher. For years I have wondered if I was get-

ting through to these children. For the first time I was successful!"

If GraceLink is not working for you, why not accept Anne-Mae's challenge? Contact your conference Children's Ministries director and ask for some GraceLink training. Then do GraceLink for one month, just as it is written. GraceLink can make you a success too.



Fast facts

Of the churches that reported...

- 55% have a children's ministries coordinator, a steadily growing number
- 90% of churches baptizing 4 or more children under age 14 also use GraceLink
- Baptisms of kids under age 14 totaled 1,175
- Potomac Conference had 35 % of their churches represented; Georgia Cumberland, 25%. Both conferences offer incentives for reporting. If you want to find out the conferences with the lowest number of responses, you will just have to go on the web to www.childmin.com/Resources/Year-end.htm.