

Spring Newsletter 2009

Volume 3, Issue 1



Youth who attended the Middle School Youth Retreat

Middle School Retreat by Eron Eguavoen

At the end of February, The Family Center and the Ravenswood Youth Athletics Association (RYAA) joined Bayshore Christian Ministries (BCM) for its annual Middle School Youth Retreat in Santa Cruz. Youth from these three ministries in East Palo Alto all came together for an awesome weekend of fun, games, and fellowship. During the weekend, the youth got to hear testimonies from individuals whose lives had been powerfully transformed by the hand of God.

Since many of the youth come from broken families, God began a healing work in their hearts as they learned about His deep, unconditional love for them and His redeeming grace for even the worst experiences they face. Javier*, a regular at The Family Center's Boy's Bible Club, decided to rededicate his life to Christ during the retreat after learning about the significance of sin and how it separates us from God's love. He and others were

touched by the story of God's salvation for us through Christ, and His ability to fully restore all the broken pieces in our lives.

I was richly blessed by the retreat, and it gave me a fuller picture of God's amazing and perfect love for all of His children. Please continue to pray for the youth of EPA, so that while they are back in their everyday reality, they would hold on to the truths they learned about God's love and presence in their lives.

Easter Distribution

by Selina Cardoza

It has been amazing to see the many creative ways God has provided for families during this time of need. With families allocating more of their paychecks to rent, the amount left for food is scarce. Yet God has been providing! This Easter the Family Center was able to bless more families by passing out food boxes donated by City Team, a Christian intercity outreach organization.

On Easter Sunday, we hosted families at the Family Center for the food distribution. There, Hector, a member of our board who also serves with City Team, gave the families a short Easter message. When Hector described Mary Magdalene's encounter with the angel, he emphasized how the angel spoke to a woman and commented on how there were so many women present to hear the Easter story. After Hector spoke, we passed out the food boxes.

We had many volunteers, including Gracie*, a woman I have been mentoring. It was a great experience to be able to celebrate Easter together with the volunteers and serve our community. We passed out 61 boxes in total and had many people respond with interest in a bible study! Praise God that He wants to fulfill not only people's physical needs, but their spiritual needs as well.

Sunday Night Meetings

by Mia Sakai

Since the start of our internship with the Family Center, we have been meeting on Sunday evenings for weekly times of intercession, team-building, and study. Over the last two years, we have studied incarnational ministry, urban church planting, and most importantly, the Bible.

Lawrence Cheng, our executive director, is currently leading us through a series of lessons on the life of Jacob. This account, recorded in the book of Exodus, is a dramatic and poetically rendered story of deception, grace, and transformation. We have thoroughly enjoyed Lawrence's broad understanding of the literary and historical context.

Most significantly, we have deepened in our understanding of God's ability to transform families and break cycles of sin. Scripture acquires a compelling resonance when viewed in the context of real life, and we are grateful for our times of study. We are also thankful for the generous friends who have provided us with meals for our Sunday evening gatherings; your kindness is truly appreciated!

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Family Center's Next Steps by Annie Cheng

In our last newsletter, we mentioned how the current rent crisis in our neighborhood has led us to consider moving to another neighborhood in case our families have to relocate and our community is no longer a "high need" area. After much prayer, the Family Center has decided to remain where we are in the E. O'Keefe Street neighborhood in East Palo Alto for another year, through June 2010. If the property company that owns the majority of the housing in our neighborhood continues on its current trajectory of rent increases, we expect



Giving food boxes on Easter (Story on p.1)

the neighborhood will be very different shortly. Making the decision to stay through this next year, though, will allow us to continue to serve the families who are still in our neighborhood, while waiting to find out the implications of this increase on our neighbors. If the rent increases substantially, we are still open to moving this summer.

We are excited for the plans in motion for this coming year. These will include working more closely with the neighborhood school, Willow Oaks, for our after-school tutoring program. Specifically, we hope to offer tutoring directly on their campus, which will allow the program to have a greater reach, and will allow us to have a closer connection with teachers of students in the program. We will also partner with the school to provide workshops to help families better prepare their children for kindergarten. We plan to have regular English conversation clubs, as well as pair our youth with mentors from a local church, who have expressed interest in

investing in our youth and taking them on many outdoor adventures (e.g., hiking, biking, rock-climbing).

Furthermore, this summer we will say good-bye to the majority of the 11 volunteer staff who have blessed our neighborhood so tremendously through their service and dedication during their 2-year internship. Some are going to graduate school, some are getting married, and all are continuing to discern how to walk faithfully and obediently in the center of God's will for their lives. We will be doing a modified 1-year internship program beginning this summer for those who would be excited about moving onto our street to minister with us starting this summer. We are looking for adults of all ages to join us. If you are interested in learning more about this internship opportunity or know of others who may be interested, please contact us at info@okeefefamilycenter.org.

New Summer Program, New Partnerships by Josefina Guillén

The Family Center is thankful for new partnering opportunities with Bayshore Christian Ministries (BCM), New Creation Home Ministries, and Ravenswood Youth Athletic Association (RYAA) to put on summer programming for the youth in our community. Instead of having one program with children varying in age from first grade to eighth grade, we will have two- age specific programs. The Family Center will run Summer Fun Days for graduating 5th, 6th, and 7th graders. Younger children, in contrast, will participate in BCM's SAIL Program. RYAA will provide interactive, fun sports activities for all the children in SAIL and in Summer Fun Days. Although Summer Fun Days will continue to include daily Bible Studies, workshops, and outings, our location will change. In the past we have run our program on O'Keefe Street or within walking distance. However, this summer we will be at New Creation Home Ministries' location. We are thankful for the benefits of this new location as we will be close to Martin Luther King Jr. Park and will have more space. We are excited about these new developments, but need prayer for the logistics that these changes create, such as transportation. Also, please pray for the Family Center and BCM children to enjoy meeting and learning from each other.

Prayer Needs

- Pray for more opportunities to share the Gospel and for people to respond to God's calling for their lives
- Pray for summer programming logistics and that God would stir up hearts as we invest in youth and young adult interns
- Pray that these new partnership ideas, especially with the neighborhood school, would allow for more people to learn about God's love for them
- Pray for our board and volunteer staff as we seek God's guidance for next year

Interested in partnering with us?
We are looking for partners in the following areas:

- Prayer
- Financial giving
- Volunteering

Please use the enclosed response card to indicate your interest.

*Name has been changed for privacy