

SEE YOU AT THE POLE 2008 **CONNECT**

OCTOBER 8, 2008

InterCONNECTED

Some met in darkness; some in brilliant sunlight; a number huddled against storms. Some were quiet and reverent; others jubilant and unable to contain their joy. Some were skeptics, but left convinced. Some stepped up to a new level of leadership; others tentatively followed.

They met in **North Pole, Alaska**; others in every state of **Australia** (back on May 22, to align with the beginning of the school year "down under"). Some were bold, exercising their faith under the protection of constitutional free speech guarantees; but in **Accra, Ghana**, students at **Lincoln Community School** are not allowed religious expression on campus, so they met at a church field close to the school.

One thing they had in common: they prayed. The body of Christ united – perhaps 2 million strong – on September 24, 2008 to pray for themselves, their schools, their communities and nations as part of **See You at the Pole™** (SYATP), the annual day of student prayer.

The theme for 2008 was **CONNECT: Speak, for your servant is listening**, taken from 1 Samuel 3:10. The familiar story of the boy prophet Samuel – on this day – served as a model of one whose heart and ears were tuned to God's frequency.

For teenagers at junior high, high school and college campuses in all 50 states and on six continents, the learning experience was halting at times; trial and error, but marked by forward progress. Many reported how their faith was stretched as they were entrusted with leading SYATP on their campuses for the first time. Not a few prayed alone; while others directed crowds of hundreds to the throne of grace. And for many,

the SYATP gathering was going to be just the first of many student-led ministry events for the school year.

For some, preparing for SYATP meant tuning their spirits by meeting monthly, daily or weekly just to pray for their school. **San Diego** youth pastor Dalon Chin reported, "There were 70 kids at **Westview High School** for SYATP...but the students have met every week for prayer before school since January. They plan to continue to meet weekly this year."

LEADING

On a foggy coastal morning, youth leader Kevin Boer wondered if any students would show at **Vista (Calif.) High School** for See You at the Pole. He said, "Driving onto the school campus, I saw only one student praying at the flagpole. I felt a little discouraged –

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Canyon Middle School, New Braunfels, Tex.



Vista (Calif.) High School

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until I spotted Jeremiah (left, with guitar) and a friend carrying a guitar and drum box. As we approached the flagpole, more students gathered."

"After doing a few worship songs, the circle was silent. Everyone looked a little confused about what to do next. Then Jeremiah started praying for his school. Tears formed in my eyes as – one by one – other students prayed until almost 50 people joined the circle."

"Afterwards, I shared with Jeremiah how proud I was of him for taking the initiative. He said he was a little nervous, but decided to step out and lead. As I drove away, the fog started to clear – and so did my vision. God is using students like Jeremiah to pray for their schools around the world."

RALLIES

Many communities are intentional about networking to prepare students to maximize the impact of See You at the Pole. Coordinator Mark Goins, who guides the Allies network in **Granite City, Ill.**, discussed their strategy:

"We did three nights of rallies. Monday and Tuesday nights were "pre-pole" rallies, targeting our church kids. We called the rallies "Connecting With God" on Monday night, and "Connecting With Your World" on Tuesday night. We challenged our kids to not only show up for the pole, but also to bring their unsaved/unchurched friends to the Wednesday night service, which was a BIG concert night. We packed out the church. Twelve teenagers responded to a simple gospel presentation and prayed for salvation or rededication."

Those results resonated with what happened nationwide at similar gatherings. At



Repossess Rally, Tumwater, Wash.

Tumwater (Wash.) High School, around 1,500 students and youth leaders packed a school gym to worship and hear a gospel message. Organizers said 85 students respond to the altar call. Coordinator Mark Schaufler shared, "The Thurston County network really worked as the body of Christ reaching out in a very effective way. This is ground swell from the county as we are working together to reach this generation. Thank you Jesus!"

FRUIT

For David Ing, leading the SYATP at **Menlo-Atherton High School in Atherton, Calif.** was a confidence-booster, and a surprisingly rich time of ministry.

He wrote, "Three others besides me showed

up (which was three more than I expected). After we had been praying for a bit, a woman came up to us. There were tears in her eyes. She wanted us to pray for her son. She said he had been a charming, loving young man; always good-natured. But since he started high school he had been feeling a lot of pressure. And the night before See You at the Pole, he didn't come home. He vanished."

"We laid hands on her and prayed for her and her son. We prayed that God would protect them, help her find her son, fill her with transcending peace, and use this for His glory. I was astonished. I didn't even think that something like this could happen (at SYATP). But God obviously set aside this little 'coincidence' for this day; to bless us and her. I don't know the outcome yet, but I praise God. Also, a girl who showed up at See You at the Pole and I are starting a Christian club at our school."

A girl came to the flagpole at **Watervliet (Mich.) Middle School**, not knowing what was taking place. She asked Alissa, one of the 20 students there, "What is going on? Why is everyone standing around the flagpole?" Alissa explained SYATP to her classmate, and then had the opportunity to lead her to Christ.



Granite City, Ill.



Bernardo Hts. Middle School, San Diego, Calif.



San Pasqual High School, Escondido, Calif.

SAMUEL

For some, the theme passage of 1 Samuel 3 became richer for them as they reflected on it for SYATP. Sarah Emory, a senior at **Stanley High School in Logansport, La.**, led the SYATP at her school. She commented, "The story of Samuel really spoke to me. I realized how many times God calls us everyday and seeks to connect with us, but we turn aside, unwilling. Even if we do listen, sometimes we are unwilling to share. Samuel was at first reluctant but shared none the less. Our everyday connection is essential to have a relationship with the Savior. Today there was a connection with God on my campus, and I want it to continue with the help of our FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes club)."

Adult onlookers noted youth who were serious about the challenge to CONNECT with God. Youth pastor Madison Lemay observed the ten students who met at **Pagosa Springs (Colo.) High School**. "It was a rather small number, but this time it was really serious. There was hard-core prayer, more than in any of my years before doing it."

HURRICANE

SYATP has always been well-attended in Texas, where it began. But Hurricane Ike slammed the Gulf Coast less than two weeks before September 24, forcing millions to evacuate. Can you say, "Plan B?"

Among those who sought to integrate the new reality with their desire to still pray together were the students at **Jersey Village High School in Houston**.

Local youth pastor Roger Nemes explained, "With Hurricane Ike having come through a week and half prior to SYATP, schools had been closed until Tuesday, (9/23) leaving little momentum and advertising for SYATP. In fact, our flag pole was gone so we had to meet inside for the first time ever. Nevertheless, at 6:30 a.m., even though some students didn't yet have power (in their homes), 78 students and a handful of youth pastors and teachers showed up!"

"We had a post pole rally that night at our church and invited the community to attend. It's something we do every year called 'Real-



Harrison (Ark.) Middle School

ity Check: Your Life - Your School - Your Destiny,' and over 320 students from several youth groups showed up for a concert and to hear our guest speaker. We had 18 first time salvations, 55 recommitments, and 18 sign up to be campus missionaries!"

In **Santa Fe, Texas**, 20 students showed up at the high school and another five at the junior high school. Youth leader Brian Bockmon reflected, "Throughout the storm, this community is trying to overcome many things and "prayerfully" realize and come to grips with the fact that *God is there through our every storm*. Pray for us as we continue praying and lifting up our school districts and faculty, but most of all, our students."

Others in Ike's path of destruction rescheduled their prayer meetings for later dates.

VISION

See You at the Pole started in 1990 in Texas.¹ What has caused it to grow; to become a reg-

ular part of so many students' lives and ministry schedules each fall? Even more important, what was in God's heart to prompt so many millions to pray over the past 19 years? Could it be that SYATP fits into His historic plan to build His kingdom and reach the nations?

Maybe the roots of SYATP can be traced further back than just to **Burleson, Texas**. Perhaps the tap root runs through a haystack in Massachusetts in 1806.

It was in a meadow near **Williams College** that five collegians met in August 1806, to pray and discuss a controversial book by William Carey that challenged the church of the day to bear the responsibility of world missions. It was a time in history when many believers thought it either unsafe to take the gospel to "the heathen," or dismissed the Great Commission as something a sovereign God would accomplish in His own time and way, without their help.



photo by Cathy Breslow

Rally, Castro Valley, Calif.



Rancho Bernardo High School, San Diego, Calif.

Specifically, should not they join an effort to go to China? As they debated the call to world missions and specifically the needs in Asia, a sudden, fast-moving thunderstorm forced the five men to find shelter; a nearby haystack was their only meager protection from the pouring rain and lightning. But intent on their discussion and praying, they continued. The decisive climax of the gathering came when Samuel Mills amended the words they *had* been praying (saying, "We will do this if we can") and proclaimed, "We *can* do this *if we will*."

Their moment of surrender represented lives bowing to the Lord of the harvest. Word spread as they challenged other collegians to join them.

This Haystack Prayer Movement became known all over the surrounding area, especially among college students. Samuel began a group in 1808 called the Society of Brethren, which bound its members together by the single-minded purpose of giving themselves to extend the gospel around the world. Several missions societies began to spring up on campuses all across the U.S. in the footsteps of Mills.²

Adoniram Judson was one of the notable pioneer missionaries who went out in this wave of global evangelism. Eighty years later, a tsunami of 100,000 young people, inspired by their example, would commit to go to the nations as part of the Student Volunteer Movement.

They (the five who met at the haystack) were ordinary young men - college students. Life forced them to search out their life purpose, maybe before it was too late; before the world had a chance to steal away their passion and talents



photo by Cathy Breslow

Rally, Castro Valley, Calif.

into other great endeavors; before the roots of careers and comfort grew too deeply into the American dream. These five had no idea that all of history was watching that day and what weight of responsibility lay on them. God uses moments like this, not to test our hearts, but to reveal them. He is unveiling to us what holds our true loyalty. Neil McClen- don says, "Life's interruptions are God's invitations." Heroes like this are made, not born.³

So what is the tie to See You at the Pole? Neil McClendon was one who spoke to 20,000 "ordinary" students at a rally at Dallas' Reunion Arena in 1990, challenging them to do the first statewide See You at the Pole. They embraced the challenge, and more than 45,000 prayed on 1,200 campuses in four states that September. What followed has been extraordinary.

Could it be that God is raising up a generation to finish what He started at that Haystack?

SYATP 2009

The next **See You at the Pole™** is **Wednesday, September 23, 2009** (always the fourth Wednesday of September). Watch the website - www.syatp.com - for details, theme information, and resources. Promotional materials are available any time for camps and other ministry activities by calling the resource office at (817) HIS PLAN (weekdays).



Natchitoches (La.) Central High School



Rancho Bernardo High School, San Diego, Calif.



Centennial High School, Bakersfield, Calif.



Allen Co.-Scottsville (Ky.) High School

See You at the Pole 2009
is **September 23**, the fourth
Wednesday of September.

¹ Read the history of See You at the Pole at www.syatp.com/info/history.

² From "The Haystack Prayer Meeting" by Claude Hickman. Read the entire story online at www.svm2.citymaker.com/haystackstory.html.

³ op. cit.

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