TAKE 5

TAKE 5 is . . .
Your five-minute refresher, a "quick read" for Network members focusing on spiritual growth, resources, and the mission of youth ministry.

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See You at the Pole Resources Available

See You at the Pole is September 27. As you plan your summer events, you may need publicity materials:

- Promotional DVD
- Printed materials

To order, call the SYATP Resource Office in Texas at (817) HIS-PLAN between 9am-5pm, Central Time.

ALSO – video footage of your 2005 SYATP is desperately needed!

Please send to:

See You at the Pole
300 Boone Rd., Suite A-1
Burleson, TX 76028

Website: www.syatp.com.

Editor's note: Missional youth ministries are always looking for ways to equip and empower their teenagers to advance the cause of Christ in every conceivable setting. Tremendous opportunities for cross-cultural mission work in the summer or throughout the school year are often geographically closer to our home church than may have been imagined. Consider this timely article describing one model of partnership with Rural America and how these principles may also apply to potential partners in Native America (www.nativeyouth.com) and Urban America (www.urbnet.org).

"Come over . . . and help us."

By Rick Cogbill

from the heart

These words from Acts 16 were a desperate plea for help, and at the time, Paul was having a vision about Macedonia.

But in reality it could have been anywhere in the world.

For Rev. Tom Horton, a 40-year veteran of youth ministry, the call was from rural America and it had been building for years.

In September 1996 he left the Seattle church where he had been the youth pastor for 28 years, and in a step of faith started Rural Church Youth Ministries (RCYM).

"It seemed to me," says Tom, "that on the whole, we were ignoring the small rural churches, leaving them to struggle on their own. It's a mission field – a vast harvest field that was being ignored."

Metropolitan or suburban churches often assume that rural ministry is the sole responsibility of the rural church, and yet tend to forget that the small rural church is often under-funded and sparsely staffed. They fail to see it as a missions opportunity.

As he shared his vision with Jim Carlson, then director of the Rocky Mountain Bible Mission based in Lolo, Montana, Jim confided, "I have been praying for the groups who are going to Mexico to stop in our town and serve us instead."

Metropolitan or suburban churches often assume that rural ministry is the sole responsibility of the rural church, and yet tend to forget that the small rural church is often under-funded and sparsely staffed. They fail to see it as a missions opportunity.

It's not uncommon for many youth groups to plan mission trips to third world countries, and while that's commendable, some very significant opportunities are being overlooked right here at home.

"Most youth pastors," says Tom, "read the Great Commission in Acts 1:8 and make the leap from 'Jerusalem' right to the 'uttermost parts of the earth.' We forget about the Judea and Samaria in the middle."

For many of us, those are the rural communities right next door – perhaps only a few hours' drive away.

The concept is simple: RCYM partners youth ministries in larger metropolitan churches with small rural churches for an intensive six- to eight-day "ministry camp" experience.

The larger church has the resources and the core of dedicated youth, and the smaller church has the ministry opportunities that these kids need to grow further in their faith.

"Many kids want to witness to their friends at school," says Tom, "but lack the confidence to do so.

By going to a new location, they see God use them, they develop ministry confidence and skill, and they come back home able to reach out to their peers and friends more effectively."

Most rural churches are overwhelmed that somebody would take the time to come and work alongside them to reach their community. The friendships formed are deep and the results are long-lasting.

Since RCYM began, Tom has seen over 400 ministry teams go into rural communities, changing many lives for the kingdom – both in the sending church and in the hosting community.

Each year, Tom's goal is to seek out more youth groups who can become involved in this rewarding missions opportunity.

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"Come over . . . and help us." (continued)

One city church saw such value in the ministry camps that over three summers, they sent out seven different teams to seven different communities. "The multiplication factor is enormous," says Tom. Most churches do one camp a summer; others do two or three.

Although RCYM is based in the Pacific Northwest, Tom believes that this ministry concept can work in any region of North America.

There are currently two veteran youth leaders – one in Minnesota and another in British Columbia, Canada – who are on the verge of launching this ministry in their areas, and Tom's prayer is that other youth leaders will catch the same vision.

Tom has developed extensive materials and training aides that he gives out to both the sending church and the receiving church, and he provides them free of charge. "I am supported as a home missionary by numerous friends and churches, so that I can give this ministry away."

Tom believes that this ministry concept can work in any region of North America.

Tom Horton's heart burns for youth, and he is motivated by the conviction that RCYM is "serving those who are reaching the generation that will fulfill the Great Commission."

He defines a healthy youth ministry as one which is producing young people for a lifetime of service, pointing to the words of our Lord in Matthew 9:37-38: "*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*"

"I believe," says Tom, "that this ministry is an answer to that prayer."

To find out more about RCYM's ministry camp concept, visit **Network Northwest** at www.networknw.org and click on the link **RCYM Ministry Camps** on the left-hand menu.



Rick Cogbill is a freelance writer and photographer based in Summerland, British Columbia, Canada. Rick is also a Contributing Editor for Canadian Technician Magazine, where you'll find his main character, Slim Shambles, getting into all sorts of trouble in The Car Side humor column. Go to www.rickcogbill.com for more information.

Mission Discovery

During Mission Discovery projects in Tennessee, Mississippi and hurricane-affected areas, youth groups join together to help rebuild and renovate homes. Partnering with local churches, Mission Discovery ministers to families who have all but given up hope on a leaking roof or broken-down porch.

Groups also help through outreach ministries which could include nursing homes visits, vacation Bible school, and door-to-door evangelism.

The schedule also includes an evening program with music, teaching, and sharing from the day's work. Go to www.missiondiscovery.org or call 1-800-767-8720.

Youth On Mission in New Orleans

YOUTH ON MISSION NEEDS ADULTS AND YOUTH TO HELP IN NEW ORLEANS – JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER:

We are working with local mission organizations in building 40 new Habitat homes, plus minister in local churches, children's homes, homeless shelters, soup kitchens and individual homes.

For more information please call 1-800-299-0385 or email bob@yom.org.

For housing needs only, email harry@yom.org.

Go to www.yom.org or www.yom.org/new_orleans.htm to learn more.

We want your feedback on TAKE 5. Send your comments to take5@youthworkers.net or fax to (858) 451-6900.

NNYM National Network of Youth Ministries