



# youthfront NEWS

VOLUME 83 | ISSUE 1

## ONE FOR THE AGES

our year of unexpected intergenerational ministry growth

A TRIBUTE TO  
OUR LATE FOUNDER

LAUNCHING  
YF NEIGHBORHOOD

UPDATES FROM  
YOUTHFRONT CAMP





## A Word from Mike

### The Amazing Life of Vidy Metsker

Dec. 23, 1923- Jan. 11, 2021

Seventy-eight years ago, this month, Al and Vidy Metsker started Youthfront (originally called Kansas City Youth for Christ). Impassioned about ministry with teenagers, they pioneered a new kind of youth ministry. They launched Bible studies in schools and organized youth rallies on Saturday nights that began attracting more and more young people who were looking for things to do while adults focused on doing whatever they could do to win WWII. Over the next 30 years, Youthfront grew into one of the largest local youth ministries in the world.

In the spring of 1975, as a senior in high school, I came to a Saturday Night Rally for the first time. I was blown away by gathering with more than 1,000 teenagers singing, laughing, praying and worshiping God. I had a transforming encounter with Jesus Christ halfway through my senior year and the timing of coming to this event changed the trajectory of my life forever. After a couple of months attending these rallies every Saturday night, I remember the night Al challenged us graduating high schoolers to consider youth ministry as a vocation. The right place at the right time and I thought- this is for me. Soon, I was working part-time at Youthfront while attending college to study the Bible and ministry. Forty-six years later, I'm still here. Al and Vidy not only invested in my training and education but also treated me like a son. For the next 15 years, they taught me so much about life and ministry. I became infused with the passion that spilled out from them for Jesus and youth ministry. They taught me so many life lessons that still shape my life today. My wife, Vicki, and I had the privilege to travel all over the world with Al and Vidy. They gave me coaching on financial management and organizational leadership. Al taught me how to grill a steak and inspired me to never quit. Vidy taught me how to make homemade ice cream and to think creatively. And now, we mourn the death of Vidy.

What an amazing 97 years she lived. Al died in 1993 and Vidy faithfully continued the ministry of sharing Jesus Christ until the final days of her life. Many times, we had Vidy come and share stories about the early days of our ministry with our Youthfront staff. Every time we had a ground-breaking event or a ribbon cutting for a new cabin, building or office, she was there cheering us on. She inspired us and encouraged us to carry on the legacy of the ministry. Vidy faithfully supported our ministry right up to the last weeks of her life. What an amazing woman of God who will be missed by so many.

Although the youth culture we work with today is radically different from the youth culture of the 1940s, we still carry the same passion for young people learning and following in the ways of Jesus Christ. As the leader of Youthfront, I take very seriously the responsibility of stewarding the heritage and legacy of Youthfront. Hundreds of thousands of young people have been impacted by Youthfront. And we continue to rejoice when we see young people grow into lifelong followers of Jesus Christ. In fact, I believe the spirit of Al and Vidy's creative passion, that is still a part of Youthfront's DNA, helped us not only survive this pandemic but in so many ways enabled us to flourish. And, since day one, Youthfront has always been fueled by our mission to bring youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ through the generous support and prayers of our friends and donors. To God be the Glory!

*Mike King*

## NEW AT YOUTHFRONT

### Bring on the Fun 2021

Youthfront's camp season is back to its full 10 weeks and 2021 sessions filled quickly.

Last summer, providing summer camp in the season of coronavirus was an enormous undertaking, but Youthfront was one of the few camps to serve youth in 2020. With guidance of a seasoned Medical Advisory Team, Youthfront hosted six weeks of day camp, overnight camp and on-site youth programming with stringent health and safety protocols in place. Campers had to meet detailed health and temperature screenings upon check-in and during camp. Youth were kept in small "cabin family" groups and staff provided meals, worship and activities in shifts to accommodate safety precautions.

This summer, the Medical Advisory Team again guided all protocols to help provide the safest environment possible. All staff and campers are being rapid-tested for COVID-19 prior to entry to camp. Youthfront is grateful to the volunteer medical professionals who have helped make this part of the ministry possible during the pandemic.

### New Faces at Youthfront

Youthfront welcomed the following new staff since the last Youthfront News issue went to press in the spring of 2020: **Tami Blanck**, Food Services and Hospitality Manager at Camp LaCygne; **Ryan Ganaban**, Program Coordinator at Camp West; **Laura Gibbs**, Director of Day Camp; **Carrie Hackett**, Director of Program Administration; **Greg Hamm**, Camp Facilities Manager at Camp West.

### Caring Hearts Needed

Volunteers help make Youthfront's ministries happen. Here's how you can get involved this summer. Relive the fun of camp as a **Volunteer Cabin Leader** or help fight hunger as a **Food Distribution Volunteer** at our monthly events in Kansas City, KS. Learn more and sign up online.

*Volunteer Cabin Leader: [youthfront.com/youthfront-camp/volunteers](https://youthfront.com/youthfront-camp/volunteers)*

*Food Distribution Volunteer: [youthfront.com/yf-neighborhood-something-to-eat](https://youthfront.com/yf-neighborhood-something-to-eat)*



Bring on the fun of camp



Caring hearts needed



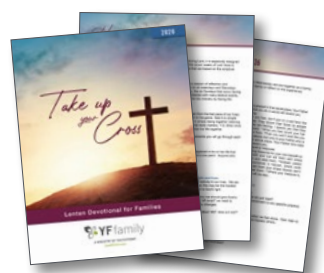
Volunteers at food distribution



# ONE FOR THE AGES

*our year of unexpected intergenerational ministry growth*

When the pandemic threatened to devastate Youthfront's ministries, God had other plans. The darkest days of uncertainty gave way to urgent creativity, a sharp focus and yielded new advocates of all ages for each of Youthfront's ministries. From Something to Eat™ meal packing to family camp options, Youthfront's programs all stretched in unexpected ways. Thanks to volunteers, donors and dedicated staff, Youthfront's mission and its future has never been stronger.



**February 26, 2020**  
The first YF Family Lent Guide was published.

**April 20, 2020**

Families began packing Something to Eat™ meals in small groups - 465,000 shelf-stable meals were packed during the pandemic.



**May 11, 2020**

ImagineX Challenge was introduced. A group of Argentine students created the "Alley Artists" business venture to focus on beautification projects around their neighborhood.



**June 22, 2020**

Youthfront Missional Journeys began hosting youth and church groups. Small groups were able to serve safely in Argentine, KS, throughout the summer.



**June-July 2020**

Youthfront Camp introduced Family Day Passes and cabin rentals to families looking for a fun and safe way to get outside.



**October 22, 2020**

A Story To Tell virtual fundraising event raised more than \$80,000 for Youthfront programming.



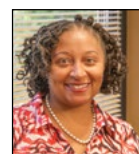
**December 2020**

More than 100 families attended Christmas at Camp events that transformed Camp West into a winter wonderland complete with a Nativity Walk.

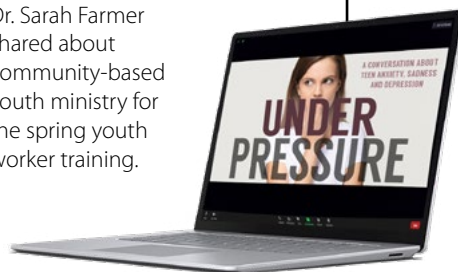


**March 16, 2020**

Youthfront staff moved to remote work.



**March 12, 2020**  
Dr. Sarah Farmer shared about community-based youth ministry for the spring youth worker training.



**April 2, 2020**

YF Family offered its first virtual session for parents, Under Pressure, focusing on the importance of teen mental health.



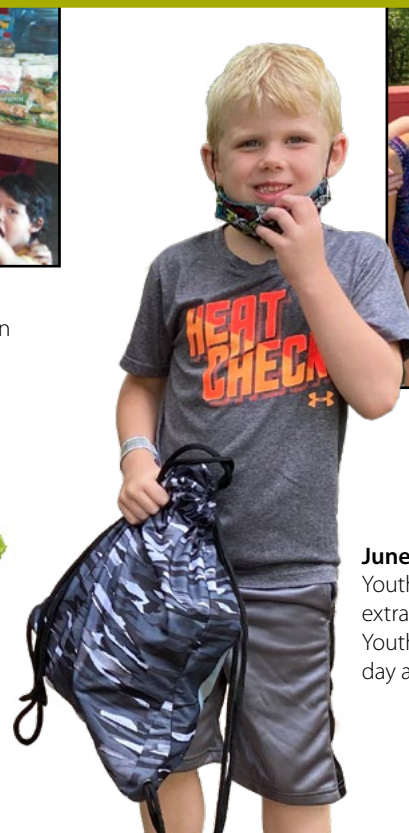
**May 4, 2020**

After historic spring flooding at Camp LaCygne made the lower road impassable, tornadic storms caused more damage. Generous donors responded with enough funding to repair the road before camp opened.



**Spring 2020**

The Family Assistance Fund raised more than \$18,000 to distribute needed grocery items to struggling families in Croc, Mexico, and Argentine, KS.



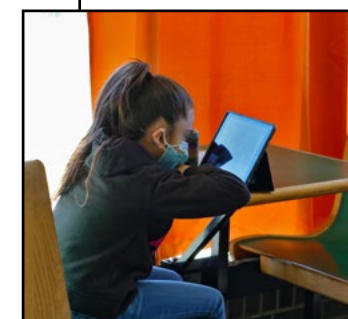
**June 29, 2020**

Youthfront Camp opened with extra safety measures in place. Youthfront held six weeks of day and overnight camp.



**Fall 2020**

Learning Pods were formed at Snack Shack KC to give Argentine students tutoring help with virtual learning.



**November 12, 2020**

Youthfront and Nazarene Theological Seminary hosted 'Church in Color' virtual conference featuring four experts who shared tools for talking with youth about diversity and racial injustice in a church setting.

**December 2020**  
A YF Family Advent Guide was produced for families.







**April 17, 2021**  
YF Neighborhood was launched with the first annual What's Good in the Neighborhood event.



**YF** neighborhood

# Unmake

## the dividing walls of our neighborhoods

This spring, Youthfront launched the new brand of the social and community outreach ministries: YF Neighborhood.

Formerly called Justice Initiatives, YF Neighborhood aims to make strangers into neighbors and create opportunities to unite people otherwise divided by social or economic lines. These initiatives are an extension of the youth formational experiences provided in Youthfront's Camp ministries and year-round high school programs. They're also a natural "next step" service and faith outlet for parents, grandparents and kids participating in YF Family ministry programs.

To celebrate the launch of YF Neighborhood, Youthfront hosted a week of serving and celebrating "what's good" in our local, urban communities. 'What's Good in the Neighborhood' included a Serve & Celebrate Day on April 17 in Argentine (Kansas City, KS) with more than 100 volunteers spending the day serving alongside local organizations. Also included was a fundraising auction featuring family fun packages and local experiences.

The YF Neighborhood ministry will continue feeding those in need through Something to Eat™ meal packing, tutoring local kids through Learning Pods, hosting Missional Journeys and creating more youth-development programming. These programs not only offer hands-on opportunities to make life better for local neighbors, but also provide unique learning experiences that help others imagine what a world without walls could be.



### CELEBRATING WHAT'S GOOD

- More than 100 volunteers and local neighbors helped with community and home improvement projects, trash and neighborhood cleanup, and area beautification in Argentine.
- Argentine neighbors and volunteers joined together for an authentic and delicious taco lunch prepared by local chefs.
- As part of the day's festivities, local unsung heroes were honored for their dedication and service to better their community.

"I haven't been recognized for anything since I was in elementary school."

*- Neighbor honored as an unsung hero in Argentine*

"No one has ever really showed me hospitality like this. I just don't have many people in my life who love me like that."

*- Neighbor whose porch was repaired*



Youthfront's summer programming is in full swing and includes brand new initiatives through YF Neighborhood. Follow us on social media or find more information about getting involved at [youthfront.com/yf-neighborhood-get-involved](https://youthfront.com/yf-neighborhood-get-involved).





## Vidy Metsker 1923-2021

Topher Philgreen is Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Youthfront. He has done full-time youth ministry in various roles from camp director, to youth pastor, to parent-as-youth-pastor for 34 years. Topher and his wife, April, have four adult children with their first grandson on the way.

Vidy Metsker was Topher's grandmother.



# A LIFE TO BE EMULATED

By Topher Philgreen

We don't know how we'll leave this earth and pass from this life to the next. Will it be a car accident? Cancer? Heart failure? Old age? But if I could choose how to die, I'd go like Vidy Metsker. First, live to be 97. Second, just decide that "it's time" to go see Jesus face-to-face. Third, knowing the end is near, get to see all your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren in a personal way to intentionally say "goodbye" face-to-face or on video chat. Lay down in peace with your family around you singing hymns and then silently pass from this life to the next in painless sleep. That is the way Vidy Metsker finished her years on this earth.

As the first-born grandson, I reflect on her life and the impact she had on so many people. I ask myself why? Why did she have such a great impact? Why is she so loved and so admired by literally thousands of people? Why did she live her life with such gusto right to the very end? Why is hers a life to be emulated?

Vidy Metsker was one of the most outward focused people I've ever known. She was constantly talking to a stranger on the street, sharing Jesus with a character at Disneyland, or helping someone connect to a local church at the gas station. She was constantly focused on others.

We are never more like Jesus than when we care for others. That's what Jesus did. Whether he was feeding someone, healing someone, caring for the poor, forgiving someone of sin, or even while hanging on the cross, Jesus was the supreme outward focused example to all of us. Vidy was as well. Her example of always loving and serving others from her family, to the Youthfront staff, to new believers, to strangers, was modeled for all of us day in and day out.

Vidy had a reason to live and woke up every day with a to-do list. But she did not just live, she lived productively and with energy until she was 97 years old. How we will leave this earth is unknown. How we live on this earth is known. Life is too short to watch it drift by in meaninglessness. Nobody modeled this more than my Grandma Vidy.

Youthfront continues the legacy of Vidy Metsker by giving kids a reason to live. By bringing youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, they not only follow him, but follow in the way he lived his life while on earth - by serving others. Whether it's at Camp, Teen Staff, Summer Staff, Something to Eat, or Missional Journeys, Youthfront will continue to provide environments where students find meaning in their life, hopefully setting the stage for a long, productive, and outward focused lives.

## Tributes to Vidy from Friends and Colleagues

*Vidy Metsker remains an inspiration in my life. She loved youth and lived a beautiful faith-filled life. I will long remember her love of the Lord and people, her smile and joy-filled perspective, and her unwavering conviction that "God Did It!" as she shared so beautifully in her book of her life journey by the same title. As I read her book, I was struck by her willingness to boldly step forward in faith to follow God's leading and help create something new in the form of "youth ministry." Stepping outside the box, Vidy walked faithfully alongside her husband Al to found Youthfront nearly 80 years ago and through that dedication, commitment and willingness to innovate and change with the times, brought thousands of people and their families and communities into a closer walk with Jesus. I am confident Jesus welcomed her with open arms as he said, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"*

—Cheryl Reinhardt, Youthfront Board of Directors

*As we live our lives we look for people who fully live for Christ, to see how they live and how they do it. That is Vidy! Everything in her life pointed people to Jesus. Just a few moments with her and we were drawn into His love and grace – and a fullness of life that encouraged us and gave us the desire to know the Lord like she did. Vidy's life was lived to the full as Jesus said we could in John 10. Her energy and enthusiasm were matchless. She was naturally friendly, loving and could conquer tasks in daunting ways. In Christ all of these things about her were infused with His life and His light, and so the things she did for the glory of God in ministry to young people and their families are eternally enormous! The Gospel was her love language. It was her passion to see young people come to Christ and live for Him. We were privileged to come alongside her in the creative, ambitious, faith-staked ways that she and Dr. Al pursued to present the Gospel. In Matthew 5 Jesus says, "You are the light of the world." Vidy was a light – a bright light! But never one who brought attention to herself. When you were with Vidy, you were with Vidy and Jesus. That light has not gone out. Every life she loved for Jesus carries that light today.*

—Tommy Thompson, Youthfront Staff

*Vidy was an amazing lady of faith and courage. She was faithful in loving her husband, others and God. I remember watching her cook in the kitchen at camp and working right alongside everybody else. She had a great smile. Vidy had some amazing stories of her life with Al and the dreams and visions that she and Al shared together. She had a very approachable personality and a contagious laugh. It was such an inspiration to see her in her later years come and participate in various celebrations of the ministry. You always knew where Vidy was because that was where the crowd was. I am so thankful for being a part of their vision for almost 50 years. What a life well lived!!!*

—Tammy Heslip, Youthfront Staff

Read the full article at [youthfront.com/vidy-metsker-blog](https://youthfront.com/vidy-metsker-blog).



"Thanks so much for providing quality content in this unusual time for families!"

Parent participant in a 2020 YF Family event



## UNCHARTED WATERS

*Family ministry offers tools and resources*

The unexpected pressures, changes and confusion for families in the last year created a space for Youthfront's family ministry to provide support.

Youthfront's YF Family ministry seeks to be a resource, offering tips and guidance for parents, grandparents and guardians. YF Family confronted the pressing issues parents were grappling with through both virtual events and its monthly newsletter and blog post for parents.

Find past issues of YF Family's blog posts and sign up for the monthly newsletter at the YF Family website. Topics this past year include:

- **Mental Health Matters:** Why you should be talking to your kids about mental health
- **How to hold on when times are hard:** Four practices to be present and communicate love
- **Time to Play, Together:** The importance of playing together as a family
- **Race and Parenting:** A Personal Journey - The personal experience of a Youthfront family
- **The "Right" Choice?** What matters most when making decisions for our kids
- **Are you tired? Worn out?** Finding Sabbath rest in the midst of chaos
- **Lessons on Race, Faith and Parenting:** Engaging with your kids about their faith and issues of race
- **Presence:** The positive impact of being present to our kids at Christmas - or anytime

YF Family also hosted online events for parents on topics including how to walk your child through disappointment and how to hold it together when things fall apart at home. Look for new events and parenting content at [youthfront.com/yffamily](https://youthfront.com/yffamily).

## With gratitude...

In a year of uncertainty, Youthfront's donors provided not just stability but growth! Thanks to so many who gave gifts of all sizes, Youthfront was able to keep the lights on and the doors open this past year while ministering to kids and families in new ways.



Donors responded when Youthfront Camp LaCygne was damaged by storms, helping fund emergency repairs to the road ahead of opening day of camp. When the pandemic shuttered most ministries and programs, donors and volunteers stepped up to fund and pack 465,000 meals for those in need through Youthfront's Something to Eat™. Youthfront was honored to receive grant support for food distribution from the Kansas City Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and from Wyandotte County CARES funds.

Thank you to the donors who supported Youthfront's virtual event fundraiser in the fall and the 'What's Good in the Neighborhood' event and auction in the spring. Many committed to a monthly gift to ensure stability in Youthfront's ministries.

From camp scholarships to meals for the hungry, Youthfront's donors make a direct impact on kids and families each day. **Learn more about ways to support Youthfront at [youthfront.com](https://youthfront.com).**



"One of my favorite memories from camp last year, when I held the same position at our LaCygne campus, was just really getting to work with the kids in our Something To Eat program and seeing that connection that they made when they realized that these meals that they were packaging were going to real families. And they just get super excited and they always did way more than we asked them to and it was just super cool to see."

**Brooke Rich**

Summer Staff at Youthfront Camp West

Follow Youthfront on Facebook and Instagram for more

#storiesofyouthfront



4600 Rainbow Blvd, Kansas City, KS 66103



## FAMILY FUN DAY PASSES

Bring the family or meet up with friends for a day at camp! Enjoy all the fun that camp has to offer – water attractions, trails, games and much more – with a Family Fun Day Pass.

Passes are \$20 per person. Ages 2 and under are free.



Saturday, June 26 | Youthfront Camp LaCygne  
Tuesday, July 6 | Youthfront Camp West in Edgerton  
Saturday, July 10 | Youthfront Camp LaCygne

**Learn more: [youthfront.com/familyfun](http://youthfront.com/familyfun)**