

YOUTHFRONT MEXICO

How the ministry
in Croc has come
full circle

WHY WE CAN'T DO
YOUTH MINISTRY ALONE

A LOOK AT CAMP
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

YOUTHFRONT'S
NEWEST MINISTRY



We can't do youth ministry alone!

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."
1 Corinthians 12:27

Many theologians, philosophers, pastors and academics are calling *A Secular Age*, by Charles Taylor, the most important book of the 21st century. Taylor makes the assertion that we now live in a Secular Age, especially in western cultures.

In his 874-page tome, Taylor explores the historical events, movements and changes that have occurred over the last 500 years - taking us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith is only one human possibility among many others. Some have said that Christianity has lost its "home field advantage."

Youth ministry in this cultural reality definitely looks different than it did 45 years ago when I came on the staff at Youthfront. The cultural landscape has changed, and youth ministry is more challenging in our current social environment. More than ever before, we need to work collaboratively with the entire body of Christ in order to make an impact in the lives of young people.

Never has it been more critical to passionately strive to help young people deeply encounter the living Lord Jesus Christ. Just asking young people to pray a prayer to gain eternal life will not result in a lifelong faith unless it is connected to a deep commitment to a journey of Christian formation.

For young people to become lifelong followers of Jesus Christ, it is not enough to know "about Jesus." They need to really, personally and intimately "know Jesus." So many young people struggle with their faith in the midst of the broken world in which we live. We want them to understand that God sees them as the Beloved.

We also want to teach them and show them how to serve in ministry to others. We want them to learn spiritual practices of prayer and engage scripture to nurture their love for God and others. We want them to love the Lord with all their heart, soul and mind. They are the Beloved of God.

That's a lot to hope for and there is no way Youthfront can do this on our own. We know how important both parents and the church are for these young people. For Youthfront to participate in spiritual formation of young people, we need parent involvement, church collaboration, volunteer help and lots of prayer support. And we know that all of this would not be possible without the generous financial support of our donors, who give and pray for the ministry of Youthfront. You are our heroes who step up to make the difference in the lives of thousands of young people in a very challenging culture. You are changing the world through these youth. Thank you for caring so deeply. We can't do this without you!

Mike King

NEW AT YOUTHFRONT

Upcoming Youth Worker Training Event

Join us on March 12 as Sarah Farmer presents, "Community-Based Youth Ministry." This interactive experience explores the ways a biblical theology of community development might inform our approach to discipleship with youth. Youth workers will leave with concrete ways to integrate community-based ministry into their programming with middle and high school youth. Learn more and register online at youthfront.com/youthworkertraining.

New Faces at Youthfront

We are excited to share some additions to our Youthfront staff. **Jason Flewellen** has joined our team as Justice Initiatives Program Staff. Jason has a passion for helping young adults and a background in youth ministry. **Braden Stanley** has also joined our staff as Camp Facilities Associate and will be supporting camp facilities and operations. Braden has a long history with Youthfront growing up in our programs and being on Teen Staff.

Volunteer Opportunities

Youthfront partners with Harvesters to hand out groceries to families in need on the second Wednesday of each month, and it takes many volunteers to make this project possible. Additionally, we have an opportunity for friendly faces to volunteer and hang out with youth at the Snack Shack KC. Would you be willing to volunteer some time to support your neighbors? Email Amber Booth at aboorth@youthfront.com to learn more.

City Splash Entrepreneurship Concept Gaining Momentum

The latest group of middle school students in the Imagine Argentine social entrepreneurship program continue to make big strides in bringing their "City Splash" idea to fruition. The students have had the opportunity to present their business plan to city officials at the Wyandotte County Parks and Recreation board meeting. The "City Splash" pop-up spray park concept was developed by students as part of the Imagine Argentine youth social entrepreneurship program in 2019. The students' dream is to bring fun, portable water oases to KC's swimming pool deserts.



Sarah Farmer, speaker for YWT



Volunteers distributing food



Students present "City Splash"

Youthfront Mexico Comes Full Circle

Imagina Program Alumni Pay it Forward



Above: Priscila Pineda interacts with a student as a volunteer at the Imagina afterschool program. **Left:** Priscila, in 2010, participates in afterschool activities as a student in Imagina.

Priscila Pineda, 19, was a young girl when she began attending Youthfront’s Imagina afterschool program in her small hometown of Croc, Mexico, outside of Monterrey.

“The Club [Imagina] became not only a place where I could go and do my homework, but it became a safe place where I could go and just be a kid,” she recalls.

Pineda’s formative experience with the program led her - and other alumni - to return to serve Imagina as volunteer mentors to the children following in their footsteps.

Pineda went a step further and volunteered this past summer for several weeks at Youthfront Camp LaCygne, where she was able to serve, practice her English and share her story with campers.

“Having Priscila’s presence at Camp this summer meant so much,” said Amber Booth, director of community programming for Youthfront. “It brought together two of our ministries in a way we’d never imagined possible.”

For more than 15 years, Youthfront has had a community development presence in Croc. It began with

Youthfront staff who committed to living there, building relationships and learning how Missional Journey teams coming from the U.S. could come alongside the community.

“Those early years were filled with seeking church and community partnerships, as well as building many long-lasting friendships,” said Booth, who served onsite in Croc for seven years. “Youthfront teams would come down and build homes, meet families and worship together. Over time, we began to understand the longer-term community needs, and the Imagina afterschool program took shape.”

The afterschool program provides homework help, a safe place to play, friendships and a daily time set aside to connect with God through prayer and devotions. Around 40 young people are participating daily.

Over time, Youthfront transitioned local leadership of the program to Mexican staff, who now manage the day-to-day operations for Youthfront. Today, Booth and Youthfront colleagues lead Missional Journeys for youth and churches to serve in and experience Croc.

The Mexico staff conducted a community survey this past year to assess the program’s impact. The results were more than encouraging.

“We were pretty blown away by how much the community understood what was happening in the program

and how much they valued what it’s meant to the youth in that area,” Booth says.

“We heard over and over again that while the program helped kids with homework, it transformed how they saw themselves, their critical thinking and their relationship with God.”

The community survey also confirmed the contribution of Missional Journey teams to the program, Booth says. “We heard affirmation of how much the U.S. teams’ presence has meant... community members were so moved that they come to get to know them, build friendships as they visit them in their homes and play and help the kids at Imagina.”

Pineda says she’s gotten more out of giving back as a graduate of the Imagina program than she gives.

“The Club made me more patient with younger kids, and I showed myself that I can accomplish positive changes in my society,” she says. “Yes, I taught them a little more Spanish and math, but they filled my life with love, experiences and honesty.”

“Imagina, or the Club as we used to call it, has been a very important adventure in my life,” says Marco Castillo González, a member of the Mexico staff and another graduate of the program.



Positively Present

The community impact survey conducted last year by Youthfront Mexico staff had some key findings:

- 92% of locals surveyed said the Imagina programs have had an important, positive impact.
- In describing in their own words what Imagina does, “helping youth to be better people and better learners” was a top theme, along with “support and building self-confidence” for youth.
- In answering what has been good about the program, the answer “everything” was given by 33% of respondents. “Teaching manners,” “being patient,” and “helping kids with reading,” were the other consistent themes.

How you can join in...

Youth groups and church teams can take Missional Journeys to serve in both Croc and in the Argentine neighborhood of Kansas City, KS. Teen Staff also serve in Croc each year. Learn more about Missional Journeys and how to take a trip at youthfront.com/ymj. Support Youthfront Mexico’s programs by giving at youthfront.com/donate.



Youthfront's Matt Saunders helps lead camp content development at Youthfront.

UNDER THE HOOD

*How Camp Curriculum
and Experiences are Built*

Ever wonder how Youthfront Camp curriculum and content gets developed? Here's a sneak peek of what goes into choosing each summer's Biblical theme and how camper experiences are designed.



MAIN THEME

As soon as one summer ends, Youthfront camp staff begin evaluating its content. How well did it tell a story from scripture? How interactive were the cabin experiences? How centered was it on Jesus? begin the brainstorming process for the next summer's theme. Once we narrow down the list, we invite the entire Youthfront staff to provide feedback. Then the camp team discerns one main theme that has traction above the others, and begin developing its daily themes.



DAILY THEMES

Much of the fall and early spring is spent tailoring daily content for high school, middle school, kids camp, and day camp. The process begins by taking the larger story and breaking it down into smaller daily themes. Each daily theme has one "big idea" -- the one thing we want campers to discover.



YOUTH WORKER PREVIEW

Youthfront partners with dozens of churches and youth groups to provide a camp experience for their youth. A vital part of the development process is inviting youth workers from partnering churches to preview the content and make suggestions.



CABIN EXPERIENCES

As the daily themes are being established, the team also creates cabin experiences-- group activities developed to reinforce the daily themes. Always interactive, sometimes playful, artistic, or contemplative, the cabin experiences provide ways for campers to reflect and dialogue with each other. It's during this time with their peers that the "aha" moments are often discovered.



CAMPER JOURNALS

Journals are produced to accompany the sessions of camp for overnight campers. Not only are there spaces to write down notes during the gatherings, but also daily reflection activities to guide quiet times.



CAMP AT HOME

Camp is a place where many campers make spiritual decisions and life changes. Those changes are best sustained with support from parents and churches. Because of these realities, Youthfront staff develop Camp at Home -- a set of activities and discussion questions for the whole family. It's designed to feel like one of the cabin experiences and provides an opportunity for campers to debrief their camp experience with loved ones.

A NEW MINISTRY OF YOUTHFRONT



We've heard from many families and church partners that they would appreciate occasional events and learning opportunities to strengthen and support families. We're answering the call with this new ministry for parents and grandparents.

Through YF Family, we'll share tips, resources and upcoming events each month that we hope will help families to grow stronger, serve God and deepen their faith together. Youthfront's YF Family ministry provides resources, tips and tools year-round via a monthly e-newsletter, blog and events.



Sign up for YF Family's monthly e-newsletter at youthfront.com/parentresource.

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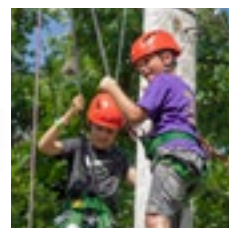
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