

FROM THE HEART

Meet Youthfront's
college staff
ministering to kids



a strong connection
new at youthfront | together for good



A Strong Connection

How a web redesign highlighted our growth and ministry ties

As this issue of our newsletter went to print, we launched a new website for Youthfront - the first revamp of our web presence in several years.

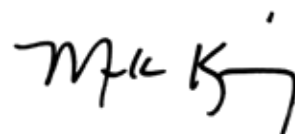
Overhauling any organization, church or ministry website is very much like agreeing to a full body scan and physical. If some area is not healthy, working well or isn't aligned with your mission, it will be under the microscope...and it's going to be hard to hide it!

As part of this "full body scan," our staff spent all summer, in particular, looking at all our ministries, how they work together with the audiences we serve, and especially at the growth and changes since our prior website had been built. We felt affirmed by how far we'd come in aligning our programs and staying focused on our unique mission. But there were a few takeaways:

1. Our YF Family ministry needed a dedicated space for its growing offerings of events, resources and classes for parents and caregivers. We're excited to expand that section of our online offerings in the coming years and to have an easy-to-find, clear home for that content.
2. Our church partners needed a section of the website that was tailored to their needs as ministry leaders.
3. Those seeking mental health support needed an easy path to find our in-house affiliate, Presence-Centered Counseling.
4. There's never been more overlap among the audiences for our YF Camp, YF Neighborhood and YF Family ministries than there is today, which is a blessing. We sought to make it easy for families connected to any of those programs to continue to grow in their faith journeys.

While every website is always a work in progress, we're excited to invite you to get to know Youthfront in a new way by taking a tour of our updated website. I pray you will learn about a program, volunteer opportunity or a story about how God is working through this ministry and through those we are blessed to come alongside.

I'm reminded of Paul's words to the church at Philippi, "...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6) Thank you, our friends and donors, for being part of that "good work" in the ongoing story of Youthfront.



Mike King, President and CEO

NEW AT YOUTHFRONT

Website Makeover Revealed

Youthfront launched a new website in October, designed to make registering for a program or volunteer opportunity even easier! Explore our new look at youthfront.com.

Expanded Play Therapy

Presence-Centered Counseling, Youthfront's in-house affiliate, has expanded its hours for therapy and specifically added additional availability for children's play therapy. Learn more about our licensed counselors and therapy offerings at presencecenteredcounseling.com.

Support Youthfront at Christmas at Camp

Once again, this December, Youthfront Camp West will be aglow with Christmas cheer. Offering a meaningful and fun way to celebrate the season, the event will serve as our primary fundraiser for the year. We invite you come out and enjoy the lights, activity and delicious food. Your attendance supports our ministries!

Staff Transitions

Youthfront has recently made some exciting transitions to staff roles.

Andy Garlich is now Senior Director of Advancement. He previously served as Senior Director of Camps.

Natasha Nikkel was named Chief Operating Officer after previously serving as Chief People Officer and Vice President of Administration.

Topher Philgreen was named Executive Vice President for Strategic Initiatives. He previously served as Chief Operating Officer.

Matt Saunders was named Senior Director of Camps. His prior role was as Director of Youthfront Camp West.



Caroline Oas, LPC, extending hours for play therapy



Christmas at Camp will be Youthfront's main fundraiser



Youthfront celebrates staff transitions as ministry grows



From the Heart: Summer Staff Spotlight

Meet some of the college students who provide camp ministry to kids at Youthfront

Each summer, nearly 100 college students join Youthfront as Summer Staff. Thousands of young people have a camp experience thanks to their hard work and heart for ministry...these are some of their stories.



Abbey Griffin
Overland Park, KS

“ I had the best summer of my life. ”

The summer after high school, a friend told Abbey Griffin Youthfront Camp needed volunteers. After just a few days at camp, she says she knew she wanted to come back. This summer, she served all 10 weeks as a full-time cabin leader.

“Joining Summer Staff was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. The community here has a way of making everyone feel comfortable from the moment they walk through the doors,” Griffin says. “We’ve come to see each other as friends and family – not just coworkers.”

As she headed back to Kansas State University, she encouraged college students to apply for Summer Staff. “I would 100 percent recommend applying for Summer Staff. The community I got to experience at camp was life changing. It is truly an example of what Christ-like love looks like and how we should be living for each other in community. I truly had the best summer of my life.”



Jakob Kopaska

Olathe, KS

It's hard not to have your role at camp shape your own faith journey. Jakob Kopaska, Day Camp Leader, led small groups of first through fifth graders through rotations of activities then would meet the rest of the campers for worship time.

"Camp has been the biggest driving factor of my growth in my spirituality and faith," he says. "I'm really grateful for the opportunity to live here for the summer and get to know God more."

"I love being a Day Camp leader because hanging out with that age group is so much fun," he says. Kopaska shared he loves getting to talk about the Gospel, hear their thoughts and answer their questions. "During small groups, we talk about God and discuss everything we learned in the large gathering that day." Ultimately, Kopaska said he just loves getting to minister to kids. "I love hanging out with them all day. It's a great time, and it teaches you a lot."



Sierra Narvaez

Houston, TX

On her path to an early childhood education degree from Baylor University, Sierra Narvaez found a unique experience as a cabin leader at Youthfront.

"Youthfront has allowed my faith to grow so much. The main thing I've learned is how children process their faith and their walk with God. It's taught me how to break down complex theological ideas to middle school or elementary level of education. Being able to watch the children process [the Gospel] has been amazing."

The Houston native found Youthfront online when she was seeking a summer internship.

"Camp is amazing. Now I have so many friends here in Kansas," she said. "Being a cabin leader definitely has its challenges, but what really grounds me throughout the day is seeing my other cabin leaders. We check up on each other – not just on the surface level – but we ask how we really are doing, deep down inside. We really lean on each other."



Noah Kwizera

Rwanda

"God, thank you for using me!" is all Noah Kwizera could say as this summer came to a close. He'd prayed God would find a way to bless others through him. In his role as worship leader at Youthfront Camp West, he says God answered that prayer.

Born and raised in Rwanda, Kwizera attends college in Vermont. He discovered Youthfront in an online hunt for a summer internship. "The best part of being at this camp is being able to see people younger than me experience God," Kwizera says.

He explains how he became increasingly aware of the impact he was having on campers through worship gatherings. "I see campers singing as loud as they can, some even raising up their hands. This has touched my heart so much." He smiles and shakes his head as he ponders on his past worries – doubtful that God would ever use him – and says, "God proves you wrong."



To read the full stories of 2022 Youthfront Summer Staff, visit youthfront.com/summer-staff-spotlight.

Do you know a college student who might be interested in being on Summer Staff? Learn more at youthfront.com/summer-staff.



TOGETHER FOR GOOD

Packing meals for those in need strengthens the ties that bind.



Staff of The Signatry pose for a photo after packing Something to Eat meals as part of their annual employee meeting (top). The Skitek family enjoys a friendly packing competition as they pack meals for those in need (bottom).

Each Christmas, Mary Lee and David Skitek make a charitable gift in their grandchildren's honor.

"Last year, we asked them where we should send their gift. Their first suggestion was Something to Eat, because they had packed meals before," Mary Lee says.

So the Skiteks funded meals for those facing food insecurity through Youthfront's Something to Eat™ program - and came together as a family to pack them.

"Seven adults and nine kids formed two (rather competitive!) assembly line teams and packed for over two hours," she recalls. "We had so much fun working together and knowing where these meals were going made the experience even more meaningful. Everyone's excited to do it again!"

As companies returned to the office or held staff gatherings this past year, many looked for a way to give back while team-building or celebrating



The Skitek family stands beside the boxes of meals they packed as a family.

being together. The staff of The Signatry, a global Christian foundation headquartered in Kansas City, chose packing meals as one of their service projects during their annual employee meeting.

Other companies and churches who packed meals this year include Girl and Boy Scouts groups, Risk Strategies Co., TreviPay, Church of the Resurrection Blue Springs, Eudora Middle School, Heritage Christian Academy, First UMC Blue Springs, First Baptist Church Louisburg, Atonement Lutheran Church, Woods Chapel Blue Springs, Grace Community Church, Kaw Prairie and Good Shepherd Kansas City.

Campers at Youthfront also packed meals as part of their service during their camp session. "We've had a great time going onsite to churches and businesses as well as hosting groups in our Argentine location to serve," said Amber Booth, director of community programming for YF Neighborhood. "Something to Eat is one of several programs we offer where groups and families can serve together through Youthfront."

This past year, volunteers packed more than 280,000 Something to Eat meals, which are distributed to food pantries and through food distribution events locally.

To learn more about a packing party or to support meals for those in need, visit youthfront.com/volunteer.



A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP



Each month, more than 350 families facing hunger find fresh produce and shelf-staples at a food distribution event in the Argentine neighborhood of Kansas City, KS. The event is the fruit of Youthfront's long-time partnership with Harvesters, which makes fresh and perishable goods available each month. Youthfront's wide network of volunteers staff the event, sort food and distribute it in the parking lot of the Franklin Center.

The event has become the largest mobile food distribution event in Wyandotte County. "We're grateful to those parents, grandparents and church partners in our network who faithfully serve each month," said Mike King, president and CEO of Youthfront. "We're also thankful for the leadership of Steve Davis at Harvesters, who has just been a steady advocate in this space and helped organizations like ours be part of the solution to food insecurity. Steve has been a great friend to Youthfront."

Davis, who previously served as Chief Operating Officer for Harvesters – The Community Food Network, was named President and CEO in July 2022.

"Our mission is that Harvesters mobilizes the power of our community to create equitable access to nutritious food and address the root causes and impact of hunger. This work can only be accomplished when we have amazing collaboration with key non-profits, churches, and community members that are passionate to ensure that our neighbors don't face hunger," Davis said. "This collaboration with Youthfront has been important as we worked to expand our reach in Kansas City, Kansas. They have been able to consistently recruit and mobilize volunteers and community members to serve the Argentine. Our success relies on true partnerships where we are able to leverage individual strengths for our neighbors and communities in need."

To volunteer at a future food distribution event, sign up for monthly volunteer notifications at youthfront.com/volunteer.



4600 Rainbow Blvd, Kansas City, KS 66103



CHRISTMAS *at Camp* DECEMBER 1-3, 2022

Light Displays
Nativity Walk
Bonfire & S'mores
Delicious Food
Silent Auction
Holiday Games

Experience the wonder of the holiday season in this festive event for the whole family! Fully decked out for Christmas, Youthfront's Camp West features an illuminated lake walk with interactive experiences to retell the Nativity story.

TICKETS & MORE INFO: [YOUTHFRONT.COM/CHRISTMAS](https://youthfront.com/christmas)