

HPCO Happenings

Highland Park Community Outreach

Highlights from our summer:

A strong staff team: We had a diverse staff team this year, each one with different gifts, personalities and cultures. **Dominique Rhodes** took on the role of day camp director. She has been on staff the last 3 summers and did an incredible job taking on this new role. Sarah supported her and played more of an administrative role this year. **Jake Oswald**, a Cornerstone University student, returned for his second year. He was able to deepen relationships built in the past and connect well with not only the kids at camp, but also the neighborhood boys. **Mario Caston** also returned this year to serve for his 5th summer. He added the firm discipline needed, yet all the kids loved Mr. Mario and had fun trying to beat him in basketball! **Emily Sanders** came for her first summer, but she has been involved with HPCO for the past year as an intern. She did an awesome job building on relationships previously established & also taught the art class. **Jocelyn Weidman** (John & Jacky's oldest daughter) co-taught art with Emily. She has volunteered for the past few summers, so it was great to have her on staff this year!



Jocelyn, Ashley, Sarah, Dominique, Emily, Aubree, Mario Jalin & Jake joined together to take on HPCO day camp!

We had 3 teen staff working with us. **Ashley Keys** (who worked her 3rd summer), **Jalen Windom & Aubree Brewster**. They were a great support to our staff! All three of them were extremely helpful and always ready to serve.

The staff not only worked hard together all day, but also enjoyed some great nights of fellowship. Each week, they had a staff dinner together and also had some fun outings! It was incredible to see so many different personalities work together to further the Kingdom of God.

Urban Arts: This was our second summer having the Urban Arts team come and lead camp for a week. The kids were engaged in music, dance and art classes all week. They stayed busy, worked hard, and the outcome was phenomenal! It gives the kids the unique opportunity of working hard and seeing the fruit of their labors as they were able to perform in front of parents and friends on Friday. Also, it's amazing to watch the gifts God has given our kids. HPCO youth are very talented! As a staff team, we were proud to watch them sing and dance their hearts out! We are very thankful to the Urban Arts team for serving us for the week. We are also excited that they will be returning this fall and doing a similar program each Monday night.



After 3 summers of working camp, Miss Ashley has become a wonderful member of our staff team & is loved by all the kids

Teen Staff: Hiring some of our local teenagers each summer is always a highlight. As said before, Ashley, Jalen & Aubree came to work with us. Here is what Ashley had to say about her summer: "This summer was a very good experience. We had a great, devoted staff team and some great kids ready to learn about their Savior. **The highlight of this summer was sharing the Gospel.** I was able to talk to some of the girls. They really seemed to have good insight on what it means to love God and all He has done for them. I really enjoyed it and felt like I was talking to babies who were ready to walk for the first time".



Our kids did an incredible job performing in front of family and friends

Discipleship with our neighbor boys:

Befkadu, who has worked with us for the past year, chose to continue discipling a few of the boys who live down the street from HPCO. He committed to spending time with them each Tuesday and Thursday. Here is what Befkadu shared about his summer with the boys:

“It was always my dream to utilize the untapped energy and potential of the teens for the kingdom of God. And the past summer God entrusted to me Darius, Rashad and Melvin. In the time I spent with them I learned a lot of things that I wouldn’t have learned in my daily life. Our Bible study started at the beginning of summer and lasted all the way to the end. During that time the boys were challenged to and did learn to memorize verses. I have seen an amazing result - their genuine love for God and their desire to know Him more overcame their desire for the world.

These boys are surrounded by many other people who set a bad example and who attract them to live a sinful life. Every day it is a struggle for them to say no to the world around them and submit to the Lord in Bible studies. The spiritual warfare that surrounds them cripples their minds from thinking positively.

During our Bible studies in the Gospel of John, God showed us who Jesus is and what He has done for us. We also had fun times - the boys taught me basketball and I taught them soccer. **God used those moments to build trust and friendship between us.**



Befkadu and his boys! It’s been a year since Befkadu moved here from Ethiopia, and since day one, he has been investing in these guys

Our discussion about the stories of Jesus in the Gospel of John was mainly constructing the whole story of Jesus that they have heard about. The bits and pieces of information they know about Jesus were forming to a full story. Their knowledge of Jesus is very limited and their big picture of God’s kingdom is blurred.

In the time we spent together God was bringing all the things to the surface. Anger and violence were two of them. The tip of the iceberg of anger continued showing every now and again. As I continued with them the Lord gave me favor to meet their families, and I was loved and trusted. I spent several days on their porch. I have learned their parent’s deep desire for transformation of their children. Now summer is over, and they are back in school. I miss them. Our small Bible study showed me the desperate need and the big size of the harvest and spiritual battle. God’s providence and guidance were always with us during our time, but it also showed me what I did was only like a single drop in the ocean. It didn’t quench the spiritual thirst in the life of these boys.”

Salvation & Spiritual growth in our kids: Our ultimate desire is that the kids God entrusts us with come to a saving knowledge of Him. **We had about ten of our kids receive Christ this summer.** Also, **two of our teenage boys** (who were discipled by Befkadu) **prayed with Jake, Mario & Jalin to receive Christ as their Savior!** Pray for these kids as they continue to learn about Him this fall! Here’s what Emily Sanders wrote about growth she saw in our kids:



Mr Jake helping the kids memorize Scripture

“It’s easy to take for granted the Bible knowledge I was taught growing up. And it’s easy to forget that most kids aren’t given that same privilege. My favorite part of day camp was **having the opportunities to share the truth about Jesus with our kids.** One day, during reading hour, I read my class a book about Jesus. It amazed me to realize how little our kids knew about their Savior. I had questions such as, “so if Mary is Jesus’ mom... does that mean Mary is God’s wife??”

During the weeks of day camp, our Bible lessons were centered on the promises of God, specifically those of the Old Testament. One day, however, we dedicated to sharing the story of Salvation with our kids, a familiar story to some and a new concept to others. After the lesson we broke off into small groups and had the opportunity to answer any questions. It was beautiful to see the light go on and witness a genuine understanding of the gospel in the eyes of an eight-year-old. I’m thankful for the opportunity to share and be reminded of the simple truth: we aren’t enough, but Jesus is. It’s hard to know what really sinks in and which child is making a genuine decision. And it can be discouraging to see the heart of a child and know the rough road he has ahead of him. But **there could be no greater comfort to know that a seed has been planted and God is in control.** I praise God for the opportunities I’ve had to catch a glimpse of His power.”

HPCO's First book signing: Amidst all that was happening with camp, our tutoring program was still meeting. Dana Hall, the thirteen-year-old that faithfully attends tutoring every week, has written her own book. One of our volunteers, Miss Betty has been working with Dana for months now. Dana, though she struggles with reading, proudly finished her book titled "The Three Girls," written by Dana Hall and illustrated by Sarah Hilliker. What an honor to have an author in our midst!

We held a book signing and invited friends and family to help celebrate Dana's accomplishment. Dana was supported by her family, school friends, HPCO staff & youth leader from Revival Tabernacle who all came out for the signing. It was a fun evening, and all the guests received a copy of the book autographed by the author & illustrator. Miss Betty went above and beyond to make it a special evening and honor all of Dana's hard work. Some donations came in that evening to support the tutoring program. A portion of them went towards sending Dana to camp at Wildwood to reward her for her hard work.



Dana & Sarah at their book signing party

Overnight Camp: This year, we took our kids to Wildwood Ranch in Howell, MI.



Wildwood is a ministry of the Detroit Rescue mission. We partnered again with Youth for Christ in Detroit to run camp for our kids. This year however, we only ran the morning and evening chapel services. Wildwood Ranch did the rest! Our staff was able to be at the camp (but not counseling) and hang out with the kids while they were enjoying the week. Our theme for the week was "Life is a Journey" Following the lives of Joseph and Paul, the kids were taught about how to begin on the narrow road (salvation) and how to make right decisions to continue to follow God, even through difficulties and temptations. Overnight camp is always a great opportunity to speak to the kids while they are out of their environment. Many times, in this environment, God speaks to them and lives are changed. Two of our boys loved camp so much, they returned the following week!

Thank you all for your partnership with us this past summer. Thankfulness seems to be a common theme at the end of each summer as we look back on all God has done. **He works in amazing ways in the lives of everyone involved, continues to bring children to Himself & provides above and beyond all that we can imagine** (both physically & spiritually!). This summer would not have been possible with out the obedience of those who chose to contribute both financially and through their prayer support.



Happy Day Camp Kids



Summer staff, Jocelyn Weidman (right) with 2 of her campers



Though she didn't have to be the director this year, Sara still found time to be with kids.

Fall Ministry Begins!

At the start of October, we began all of our fall programs. Here's a glimpse of what a week at HPCO looks like:

Monday nights: Urban Arts (UA) returns! Each Monday night, the staff of Urban Arts comes to HPCO to teach our kids in music, drama & art. Twenty of our 3rd-8th graders are involved in this program. They will be working all fall to get ready for a Christmas performance scheduled for some time in December.

Our UA kids also have the opportunity to partner with Kensington Community Church (a large church north of Detroit) to do a work project to bless the residents of a nursing home here in Highland Park. The kids will be making cards and decorating pumpkins to deliver to the residents at the end of October. They will also be performing one of the songs they have learned while at UA. We are looking forward to our kids having this opportunity to serve and bless those who stay in the nursing home.

Tuesday nights: We will continue taking some of our youth to Revival Tabernacle, a church in Highland Park that we have partnered with. This has continued to be a great way to connect our kids and their families with a local church. They enjoy being a part of the youth group and connecting with the youth leaders as well as other kids in the area.

Also, on Tuesday nights, Emily & Betty will continue tutoring two of our Jr. High girls before youth group. They have built an incredible relationship with these girls and seen them improve in their reading & math



Katie Beth Hostetter, founder & director of Urban Arts continues to be a great blessing at HPCO as she uses her gifts to teach our kids



Hot-N-Ready Pizzas: cheap, every youth workers dream, and kids never seem to get tired of it!

Thursday nights: Tutoring/mentoring & Youth group. God continues to bless us with a wonderful team of leaders who care about investing in our youth and have built long term, meaningful relationships with them. Each Thursday, our youth have the opportunity to receive tutoring & be involved in our youth group. This year, we will also be adding a worship time before our small group Bible studies

Sunday afternoons: We have our once a month Kids Club the first Sunday of each month. Most of the kids in this program were involved in our summer day camp, so we are excited to have the opportunity to continue investing in them spiritually through out the fall.

If you think of us during the week, please be in prayer for each of these programs. Our desire is that they be more than programs to entertain our kids and keep them busy, but that they are **opportunities for our kids to encounter the love of God in a safe and loving environment**. For many of them, these programs are a source of needed stability in their lives that is a huge part of their spiritual growth.

Girls Discipleship (by Sarah Hilliker):

For the past 2 years, it has been a blessing to disciple one of our teen girls, Ashley. Many of you have read & heard about Ashley as she has been involved in our programs, and such a huge part of my life. Tears come to my eyes as I see what God has done, and continues to do in this young girl's life. As I have prayed about what the next steps are in Ashley's spiritual growth, one of the greatest needs I have seen is her lack of Christian friends to help her grow. I also have had a desire to do a deeper Bible study with other teen girls who are ready for the next step. This has lead to me asking two more girls to join our Bible study, Jayda & Aubree. What's even more meaningful about working with these girls is that they are the daughter of Carlos, one of John's former youth group guys with whom he still spends time with regularly. Talk about reaching generations!

The girls & I will be meeting each Sunday afternoon and studying a book entitled "Relationships", which focuses how to have God-centered relationships in our lives & also our relationship with Him. As the four of us hang out we get to know each other better. I can already tell that we are going to have a lot of fun not only studying, but enjoying each other's company. My desire is that they will be an encouragement to each other as they walk together & that lifetime friendships will be built.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

by John Weidman

Recently I **had the chance to reunite with one of our old youth group students**, Eddy, and spend some time encouraging him in his walk with the Lord in the challenges that he faces in his life as a man of God. I met Eddy when he was 17 and he had just recently found Christ and was in the process of growing in his faith. Though he **had experienced a very difficult childhood and had made some bad choices in his teen years**, he was making some dramatic changes in his life at 17 years of age. As he and I and another former youth group member, Carlos, gathered together at a Coney Island (though we could have gone to Applebees or some place similar, it was Eddy's desire to relive the "Coney Experience" because that is where we always used to meet for discipleship before I owned a home in his neighborhood—he also missed eating chili fries with cheese because they don't have that in Georgia where he now lives).

While at the "run down" Coney Island in a bad neighborhood, **we reminisced about his life and how far the Lord had brought him**. He reminded us of how when we met him he as a high school junior that he had a 0.83 GPA. Now, many years later, he was sharing with us the challenges he faced with the new promotion he got from General Motors being the Area Service Manager (or something like that) over 10 states and that they wanted him to move his beautiful wife and 4 beautiful children to Atlanta Georgia. **We talked and prayed, believing that the same God that brought him this far was going to continue to strengthen him for the challenges ahead**—Challenges such as facing additional pressures on his job, having to sell and buy a new home in, having to find a new church home, and find new adequate schooling for his children.

We all left the gathering encouraged and inspired in our faith to face whatever it is that God had for us. For a long time now, it is those who were once my disciples who do a lot to encourage and strengthen me in my own journey. As I reflect on what we are trying to accomplish at HPCO it occurred to me that **Eddy and Carlos are great examples of what we hope every young man now in our mentoring program will become**. Thus, we press on with the young men the Lord has given us now to mentor in hopes that they also mature in this way.



Eddy, Carlos, and John at the Coney Island



John and Jacky at the Q place conference with Detroit Navigators Dennis and Sarah Williams

Other events:

One event that Jacky and I were able to attend was a **Q place conference** in Chicago IL. Q place (once known as Neighborhood Bible Studies—NBS) is an organization dedicated to helping facilitate evangelism and Bible study in various ministries. It was a great time of inspiration and discussion about how we can be more effective in doing creative evangelism in our respective communities. We look forward to exploring ways we can implement some of the strategies we learned at the conference.

Beyond that we had a chance to invite people to our annual **Golfathon Fundraiser** that we did in partnership with the Detroit Navigators. Fortunately the success of the event didn't depend on my golf game but in the fact the funds were raised for a good cause. It was a very enjoyable event that included a lunch and a testimony and a salvation message given by former Detroit Tiger, Frank Tanana.



John in at Golfathon with cousin Troy and brother Jim. Thanks to them (not me) we won 3rd place.

Prayer Corner

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Sarah and Emily's house was broken into recently and 2 laptops and 2 ipods were taken. Please pray that the criminal would be caught and that God would provide replacements for the lost items.
- That God would bless our Fall fundraising efforts
- For the effectiveness of our upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas outreaches.
- That the children's hearts would be changed through the programs they are attending and the relationships they are building with Jesus and with staff and volunteers.
- For God to send someone do some major repairs on our facility: 1) To fix the hole in the roof before winter hits, 2) To donate and install a new boiler, 3) To donate time and supplies for a new kitchen floor.

PRAISES

- That Sarah and Emily are doing fine and that nothing more was taken and the damage was minor.
- That Fall programs are off to a GREAT start with many dedicated volunteers
- Thanks to our GENEROUS support team we were able to pay all of our bills for the summer program
- For the many commitments to Christ that occurred during our summer ministry
- For the changes God is making in the lives of our young people in spite of the opposition they are facing daily.
- For the donation of nice used computer that we were able to use to bless a family who needed one
- For the donation of a good used vehicle that we were able to give to a family who needed one.

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Address Correction Requested