

COMMUNITY.

A publication of Shepherd Community Center

Surviving Summer

“One boy wanted to stay after devotions and pray for his brother. His brother is in a gang and he wanted to pray that he would be safe. It seems like none of these kids have a lot of support at home. It’s a very humbling experience to see where they’re coming from.”

– Jessica, summer intern

Shepherd Community Center started offering summer day camps in 1997. That first year, there were about four dozen kids who came half a day, four days a week, for seven weeks. It was when we told the kids that they had to bring their own lunches that we noticed a problem: some kids didn’t bring anything, and most didn’t bring anything nutritious.

Now here we are, twelve years later, hosting four hundred kids for nine weeks. “And we’re going through more food than ever before,” says Shepherd Executive Director Jay Height. “We’re providing hot food at four different sites, four thousand meals a week in all—and that’s just day camp. We’re giving away eight hundred bags of groceries a month on top of that.”

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Becoming Culturally Competent

How Using a Salad Fork Can Break the Cycle of Poverty



Shepherd's Continuum of Cafe is made up of several different programs, covering a twenty-five-year span, and all are designed to break the cycle of poverty. Most of the programs are intended to address the necessities of life, but we're always open to new ideas.

One of those new ideas came from our Food Service Manager, Jim Bradford. He was offering a cooking class for our teen girls—but the idea that sprung from that is the interesting one.

"I told the kids that sometime during my cooking course," said Jim, "I'd take them out to a nice restaurant—the kind that has tablecloths and salad forks—but when we did, I realized pretty quickly that the girls felt very uncomfortable in the restaurant. They didn't even know what to do with a menu that vast. They felt totally out of place."

It may not sound like a big deal, but more than one of our neighborhood kids has struggled upon arriving at college—not academically, but culturally—some don't fit in and don't know how to. So far, we have no formal program to address this kind of thing, but there's an

awareness at Shepherd these days of the need for cultural competency.

Jim's next step for the girls was to get a video on etiquette. Then there was the conversation about how one should dress at a nice restaurant. "I knew I was out of my element," said Jim, "so I got my mother and my wife involved, and it sort of mushroomed from there."

Soon, each girl had a sponsor, and each sponsor helped pay for appropriate attire. Jim was a little unprepared for the enthusiasm with which the sponsors took on this project. "Volunteers and donors came out of the woodwork for this." Some taught the girls things like how to use a soup spoon; others offered to do hair or fingernails for free.

The big day came when the girls had finished the cooking course, got all dressed up, and Jim took them (and their sponsors) out again, this time to one of the city's finest restaurants. "Actually, I didn't get to go in; my mom had made it an all-ladies thing by that time." But it was an experience our teens will never forget, and in a way Shepherd might not have expected, it became another step toward breaking the cycle of poverty in their lives. ■

Silver Bells and Cockleshells

Learning Life Lessons from Gardening

You won't read the New Testament long before you notice that Jesus liked farming metaphors: fields being white for the harvest, the wheat and the tares, the sower and the seed, etc. Even though these are familiar enough to have become clichés, we find, as Christ did, that it's not hard to draw life lessons from gardening.

And so for the second summer, some of Shepherd's high-school kids are planting, watering, weeding, and will soon enjoy the benefits of their harvest. The Garden Program is part of our Youth Job Preparedness Program, which not only provides a summer job for high schoolers, but also provides financial literacy classes, college visits, help with interviewing techniques, resume composition, and even start-up savings accounts.

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Dave Ferguson tills the soil at one of our garden sites.

* Learning Life Lessons from Gardening

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This summer, twenty-five kids are involved under the supervision of Shepherd's High School Director Colby Grindean, with the help of Board Member Dave Ferguson and Dave's wife, Valerie. "I think it's cool" said Colby, "that Valerie will actually be teaching them about gardening, instead of just having the kids pull weeds all summer." But there are plenty of weeds to pull: one third of an acre, lent by Mount Pleasant Christian Church, is currently under cultivation.

Shepherd's gardens serve the threefold purpose of teaching a good work ethic, feeding these kids' families, and providing money for college. Participants get minimum wage, but that's only the beginning: An Individual Development Account (IDA) grant program matches their stipends at a rate of three-to-one when the money is used for college. We'll call that "seed" money. ■



Jessica, one of our summer interns and some of her new friends.

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"And we're serving food that the kids like," Jay continued. "The kids are getting milk and good stuff, and they're eating healthy—some of them are ecstatic that it's something other than soup!"

Shepherd's day camps have much that you would expect, such as crafts, activities, games, and play time, but the main thing is that the kids will be cared for physically, emotionally, academically, and spiritually in a safe and loving atmosphere.

It's a big job—bigger than we could do by ourselves—so we got some help: Twenty-one college students from all over the United States have come to intern at Shepherd for the summer. Many of them are associated with Campus Crusade for Christ, and together they all make up a new program called *The Heart of the City*. The purpose of the program is not only to better minister to our kids but to develop these young emerging leaders for a lifetime of ministry.

"I wanted to do something where

I could make a difference," said Jessica Scott of Manassas, Virginia, one of our interns this summer. "I learned about the program on the web, and I could see that there was a difference being made here with Shepherd's Continuum of Care, and I wanted to be a part of it."

"At first, the kids here seem just like any other kids—they're great. But it's heartbreaking to see where they are academically," said Jessica, a senior at Virginia Tech focusing on elementary education. "One of the fifth graders is reading at a first-grade level. None of the sixth graders can tell me what a prime number is. They get frustrated, but they still want to learn. I want to be a teacher, but now I just really want to show them God's love, and maybe I can teach them something about math and reading at the same time."

Summer Day Camp continues through mid-August and it (and the interns) still have many needs. To see how you can help, please check out the list on our website, www.shepherdcommunity.org. ■



From our Director

I recently read an interesting book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, by Malcolm Gladwell. In this book, he has studied several scenarios of life and the probabilities for them. One chapter highlights the importance of what Shepherd Community Center is doing each summer. In the ninth chapter, the author explores the academic scores of urban and suburban youth. When compared, there is only one difference: the regression during the summer months for urban students. Test scores are even until after the summer break. Tragically, that study duplicates what we see here at Shepherd.

Working with the school system, we have made additions to our summer programs to include individual tutoring, daily reading, computer time, science projects, and writing in their journals.

Yes, our summer is much more than just swimming and games. Let me be clear, fun is still on the agenda, but our goal is to help them graduate. None of the four hundred students in our program will regress this summer. So, does the name *Summer Day Camp* give you the image of all that is happening? Probably not, but the kids get to see it each and every day for the nine weeks they come.

Fun and progress can both happen, and they do here, each and every day. ■

Thanks,
Jay Height



NEEDS LIST: Supplies for Shepherd Academy

- Legal-size hanging files
- Legal-size pocket folders expanding to 3.5 inches
- Copy paper, 8½ x 11"
- Ink jet cartridges (Dell series 5 - J5566)
- Stick-on foam shapes – animals, flowers and shapes (hearts, circles, squares, etc.)
- Clear contact paper
- Dry erase markers
- 16 Chia Pets (any kind, preferably animal ones)
- Toddler crayons (fat ones)
- Diapers – esp. sizes 4-6
- Books: appropriate for infants to 12-yr.-olds – especially in Spanish
- 4 copies of the book *Charlotte's Web* & 1 DVD of the movie
- 4 copies of the book *Bridge to Terabithia* & 1 DVD of the movie
- Toys
- Board games
- Fifteen 12"x12" scrapbooks
- Skyrail suspension marble runs
- Thames & Kosmos

Physics Workshop (2 or 3 kits would be ideal)

- Thames & Kosmos Physics Solar Workshop (2 or 3 kits)

The following items are very specific because of the teacher's curriculum and are available at www.ssw.com. Please call us if you want more info: 317-375-0203

- Wooden Birdhouses
- Color Me Jean Purses
- 2 packs of Classic Custom Hot Rod Craft Kits
- Garden Rain Gauge
- Mineral Mosaics
- 2 packs of Tempera Paint
- 2 packs of Paint Brushes
- 2 packs of Fabric Paint
- 3 packs of Sidewalk chalk
- Origami Paper
- Color Splash Dough
- 2 packs of Foam Sheets
- Giant Embroidery Floss Pack
- 2 packs of Dazzling Dioramas
- Laminated Jumbo Wall Calendar



Shepherd's Mission Statement:

Shepherd Community Center cultivates healthier children, stronger families, and a safer neighborhood through supportive relationships that meet the physical, emotional, academic, and spiritual needs of area residents.



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