

# Urban Connections

Connecting with Christ... Connecting with People.

## S p o t l i g h t s

### Website Updates

Keep an eye on our website for updated lists of events and current material needs shopping lists.

### Are we Friends?

Did you know that we have a Facebook group? It's a good way to hear about what's happening and hear current requests. Join us now!

### Summer Missions?

Do you have a team willing to serve? Consider a mission trip to Urban Connections in Columbus, Ohio. A week in June can be spent with youth and families in our urban neighborhood. Your team can join with us for urban ministry training and also serve the neighborhood with day camps that will include outreach, tutoring, daily outings and relationship building. For \$150 per person we include meals and housing. Contact Cathy Alexander at (614)252-3726 or at [cathy@urban-connections.org](mailto:cathy@urban-connections.org) for more information.

### MONDAY VOLUNTEERS

One of our biggest needs is for a few volunteers to work with young students on Mondays. Help with teaching Bible club lessons, planning games or crafts, and taking time to sit down and eat with the kids are all part of our ministry time. If you can take part in this, please contact Cathy Alexander.

## C h a l l e n g e

### Tech-Touch

Many people speak ill of the social networking, texting, mp3-listening generation that is coming of age. As we engage with the students we see that it's not as easy to get their attention. Parents (and Bible study leaders) have trouble making the youth turn their phones off.

Teachers can't monitor cheating as easily. Violence and sex are on every You-Tube screen. Students listen only to their headphones. The adults just don't have as much control.

We've felt that way too. We're a relational ministry. Last month I went to a workshop about reaching youth who are turned off by church. I heard there that in this kind of ministry and in this kind of neighborhood each person needs a "touch" (any contact with us) 3-4 times each week to build relationship. At first I considered that we weren't doing well with this because some of our students only see us once each week for Bible study. But with this texting generation I think technology "touches" should count.

A few months ago we created a Facebook group (called "Urban Connections" if you're interested in joining). Through this we can tell several of our students at once about an outing, a challenge or a cancellation. We add pictures for our students, volunteers, supporters and the rest of the world to see. This has brought our ministry into contact with people who would normally never look us up. Also on Facebook, we've added the students as friends. That means we can see their status, see what they talk about and see their pictures and videos.

It's a mixed blessing. I was more comfortable with the students when I was oblivious. I think I've discovered why some adults don't want to try out Facebook and texting. The kids might be *real*! Kids text me with their awful grammar and spelling and I have to figure out how to respond. Our youth have some appalling "status" remarks on Facebook. And the responses of their friends aren't always pleasant either. When they are writing one sentence about what's on their mind they aren't considering that one of their "friends" is their Bible study leader. I think they're only thinking about expressing

themselves in a real way to the other 437 "friends". Their thoughts aren't sanitized. They aren't choosing their words carefully or proofreading. But maybe that is what we who minister to them need to see.

So what's the benefit? I get to see them for who they really are... and likewise, they get to see me. Not all of my status' are sanitized either - and the students need to see that. And we bring it up at Bible study. We've talked about how much time they spend online and we've brought up to the group how trashy some comments are. They've shared music videos with us that I would never normally look at - and I don't like the words, but at least now I know what I'm dealing with. But then sometimes there's a glimmer of encouragement when you log on like I did today and the current status of a 19 year old guy is "I once was lost but now I am found living with the lord makes things all good!!!"

As the saying goes, let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The technology isn't evil if we can use it for the good of those to whom we minister.

#### Shop online and donate!

We've mentioned goodsearch.com, an engine powered by Yahoo which will donate money to us every time you search. Now you can donate even more when you SHOP online at goodshop.com. Please consider doing your online shopping with the 1000s of stores at goodshop and making us your beneficiary.

## L e t u s P r a y . . .

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For the youth of our ministry. Middle School and High School Bible Studies have the potential to change the lives of these students. Specifically you can pray for Yesenia, Gerardo, Talea, John, Will, Robert, Michael, Brittany, Brian, Byran, Brandon and Bobby.

For our volunteers and financial supporters, that they would continue to be encouraged in whatever way they serve us. And pray too about whether you can be part of our ministry to the near east side.



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