

GREAT IDEAS

These are some ideas, activities, games, events, and more that really worked for others. Maybe you can do something similar or maybe an idea here sparks an idea of your own.

JORDAN KNIGHT (FIRST PRES. GALESBURG)

We have what's called **UNITE** where area churches get together 1 Sunday night a month for joint youth group. It works so well. Not only for the huge youth groups, but for the churches with practically no youth programs at all. 2ndly using (Pop) culture is a must. Last year when talking about music we played musical chairs, harmless right? When we started playing the music was a Lil Wayne song that all the kids new. They couldn't believe I would play a song like that in church. This sparked a huge conversation that took us directly to scripture and the music we listen too everyday. While the kids couldn't believe I would play that 'bad' music in church nearly everyone knew the words, had it on their Ipod, etc. It opened eyes and exposed how much music influences us for the good and the bad. We can't act like the world around us doesn't exist we've got to find Jesus in it. Helping kids do things like this have been the most effective ministry I've done.

REV. JOEL VANDER WAL (NORTHMINSTER PRES. PEORIA)

Jell-O Olympics (I say this knowing that some people don't like messy games, but the Jell-O Olympics was a lot of fun and drew about 75 MS students over a Christmas Break)

El Fuego: Every Wednesday night during the summer we gather together around a fire at someone's house, play some yard games like bocce ball or ladder golf. Or play card games like Apples to Apples. Then a student pulls out his guitar and we sing praise songs for about 20 minutes take prayer requests and pray. It's a great way to stay connected with students during the summer. especially those who tend to go away a lot on the weekend!

REV. STEPHEN MCKINNEY-WHITAKER (UNITED PRES. PEORIA)

The best thing our youth group has done is to **partner with other churches**. We didn't have a lot of youth in our church at first but we had a great space, a lot of resources, and many leaders. So we invited other churches to partner with us. We now have a youth group made up of three local Presbyterian Churches. It isn't just United's it is everyone's. We gave it a name "Quest" and each church has ownership over it. Maybe there are other churches in your town that have a few youth that if you combined you could have a nice sized youth group.

One activity our youth really liked last year was the **video scavenger hunt**. You divide youth into teams, give each team a camera, and a vehicle with a driver. Each team is given a list with things they have to find and film or do as a team and film with different point totals for each. Teams get an hour then they come back and watch all the videos. This was our Quest kick-off event last summer and really gave us momentum going into the year. You can find video and example scavenger hunt item lists at my site www.youthministrynotebook.com

KAREN MILLER (WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN, PEORIA)

Youth Sunday - I know a lot of churches do this. Ours always has, but I sometimes feel that this is a missed opportunity for the congregation to learn more about the youth they promised to care for when they were baptized. For years, your youth service was just some random topic, with some random hymns picked out and boxed liturgy. It has evolved in the last few years. Youth Sunday is now a showcase. Our youth perform the music and mix some traditional with some non-traditional. They write the liturgy. They write sermons that share who they are with the congregation. They take complete ownership of the service. They are allowed to mix it up and do it their way. One year they had the congregation meditating and learning about different ways to pray and sharing how they pray. Another year, they had the organist play a prelude and postlude from their favorite Broadway show. It is something they take a lot of pride in and get to enjoy all the compliments after. It works for all size groups. Even those kids that are more shy can work the sound for the service...or put together a power point presentation.

Snaps - We take a yearly retreat around March. We have a topic for the weekend and have activities and Bible Study mixed in with some free time and such. One thing the kids always look forward to is our Saturday night worship and "snaps." I am sure other groups to variations of this and I know my group has shared it with other youth groups they have attended, so I know this is something they look forward to. It started with our group 6

years ago at a retreat. Our oldest youth said he did something similar at camp. One person sits in a chair facing away from the group while you go around the group sharing something nice about the person in the chair. Over the years this has evolved in our group to something different, but it is always the thing everyone looks forward to. Even if you have visitors to your group for the retreat, it is easy to involve them in this process. It is amazing for self-esteem as well as letting someone know what they mean to you. The way we play now is on Saturday nights is we cook dinner together and as we eat and clean up we put out a bowl with each persons name on it as well as pens and slips of paper. Everyone takes a stack and writes something nice about everyone and puts it in their bowl. The past couple of years for our Saturday night worship, I have set up a 5-7 station prayer labyrinth (this is another good idea if you want more info on that) and the room is candle light and there are activities and instructions at each table to focus the youth. There is meditative music and it has sometimes been very powerful. Once that is complete we gather and read the "snaps". I take one bowl, pass out a paper to each person (they usually read someone else's snap) and we read them and snap after we are done. The kids came up with the idea to start writing them down so they could be more honest and less embarrassed. Sometimes funny and sometimes touching...it is a good way to let others in the group know that they are important.

REV. JOSHUA ERICKSON (2ND PRESBYTERIAN, BLOOMINGTON)

Station nights

Many of the issues that teens face are multi-faceted and that means that you can't address all of it in one talk/sermon. So instead of having to do four weeks of programming on a difficult topic, plan a night where they will have 15-20 minutes to discuss the different aspects of a topic. You can use four rooms in the church and then have them walk around in small groups. Example: This was the final week of a three week series on love, sex, and dating. Week #1 - Personal testimony on the cost of not waiting till marriage to engage in sexual activity/forgiveness. Week #2 - student testimony on abstinence pledge. And Week #3 - station night. Station #1 - Homosexuality. Station #2 - Cost of pre-marital sex Station #3 - What do you do if you think you are pregnant or got someone pregnant? Station #4 - Abortion.

Muck Wars

Tell students to wear clothes they don't mind getting ruined. Also they will need to bring a towel and change of clothes.

Games:

- Flour showdown. Separate into teams and have the teams line up on opposite sides of the tarp. Each student gets two cups filled with flour. They take turns challenging another person from the other team. Once you receive a challenge you go to the center of the tarp and stand back to back. Count to three and each player takes one step with each count. Then they turn and try to dump their cups of flour on the other person. Whoever has the most flour on them at the end of the duel loses.
- Egg toss. This is where everyone pairs off and each pair gets an egg. The teams (pairs) stand across from their partners in two straight lines. They start about 4 feet apart. Someone says "Toss" and they toss the egg to their partner. If the egg doesn't break, one side takes a step backwards and someone says "toss" again. This continues until one team (pair) has an uncracked egg and all other teams are out (their eggs cracked). The fun part is when the egg bursts in someone's hands and the splatter is all over them.
- Shave the balloon. 12 people play this game. 6 are sitting and 6 are standing behind the sitting students. They are each given a balloon that is filled with chocolate syrup and water and the outside is covered in shaving cream. They are also given a razor. (It is best to nick the razors before hand to ensure balloon breaking) The object is to shave the balloon over the head of the person sitting. If you pop it, you lose. If you manage to shave the balloon completely, you must then pop the balloon over the persons head on purpose. First person to complete both the shaving and popping wins.
- Facials. For this game, you divide into two or more teams (try to make the teams even). Each team selects a teammate to get the "facial". If it is hot out, this is tricky, otherwise, have another teammate (or two) spread marshmallow cream all over the selected teammates face. The person getting the facial wears the swimming goggles. The rest of the team is given cheese puffs. Their teammates stand about six feet away. Each team member gets 5 to 10 cheese puffs to throw at the peanut butter. The team who can get the most cheese puffs to stick wins. Time them- we gave them a minute.

- Muscle man game. Again you need to divide into 2 or more teams. This time, they choose someone to make into a "Muscle Man" (it works best if you can have the smallest person but we've used all sizes). The person chosen puts Fruit of the Loom long johns on over their clothes. Everyone else will be filling the long johns with messy water balloons. Half the fun is when the balloons pop but the goal is to have more unpoped balloons in the long johns than any other team. This can also be done with regular balloons. At the end, count up the balloons and whoever has the most wins. Part two of this game is to see who can have their team pop all the balloons first- works best to separate into boy and girl teams for this game.
- Food fight/ slip n slide. Have the different buckets of food brought to the four corners of the tarp. Each student will get two Dixie cups and they are to all stand in the middle until the game begins. At the end of the food fight bring out the cans of shaving cream. It may work best to have people giving out handfuls to the students or to give each student their own can. It depends on the size of the group and how many cans you have.

Supplies:

- 2 pairs of swim goggles
- 3 spray bottles
- 1 consumer size box of Oats
- 2 large bags of Rice
- 1 consumer size box of Cheerios
- 80 cans of Shaving Cream
- 2 bags of uncooked Pasta
- Dixie Cups
- 7 Separating tubs
- Corn starch (slime)
- Food coloring
- Napkins
- 1 large bag of Flour
- 4 dozen Eggs
- Cheese puffs
- Ketchup
- Water instant potatoes
- 4 giant containers of Apple sauce
- 3 bottles Chocolate syrup
- 3 cans Marshmallow cream
- 2 tubs of frosting (Sam's Club)
- 2 sets of long johns/ men's two piece pajama set
- Balloons
- Water balloons
- 6 Razors
- Caution tape
- Tarps
- Gardening staples (to hold down tarps)
- Rubber mallet to hit staples into ground
- Tarp to cover valuables/ music station
- Water hose and place to hook it up

1. Find area to host the Muck Wars.
2. Set up caution tape around the area that you want the students to be contained in. This keeps things more controlled.
3. Place tarps in the center of the controlled area and use the garden staples to keep it in place. This will serve as a battle field. It is ok if the tarps do not cover the entire controlled area.

KIM SIMMS (RIO PRESBYERIAN, RIO)

When we decided to try and get our youth group started again (about 5 years ago) we tried to come up with a catchy name that fit our group. Since we were going to be using the church attic as our meeting room we went with attic youth group. (Area Teens Together In Christ) We kicked our first meeting off with a informal organizational pizza party. We had a great turnout. About 15 area kids. We asked them what they would like to see in their youth group. We got lots of good ideas, we decided to make this a comfortable " lounge" room. We had a table set up to use when needed, we had a couch, automan (sp?) and end table donated. We splatter painted the room and hung Christmas lights on the wall. The members were able to put their name on the wall with foam letters. We have a lava lamp and disco ball for a fun effect. The kids had a lot of fun making this their room.

Our meetings are from 6-8. We begin with a meeting from 6:00-6:30. The lesson follows from 6:30-7:15. We end the night with a meal and fellowship from 7:15-8:00. Two members provide the meal each month. The leaders provide the soda.