



# REACH!

Produced by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Commission on Youth Discipleship

## Cultivating a Youth Ministry That Matters: Part III

by Dr. Joel Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

This series of articles is focusing on cultivating solid youth ministries. Cultivating is a good metaphor because through our ministries to pre-teens and teens, and our emphasis on the Means of Grace, we are preparing youth to grow. Good youth ministries 1) plant early, 2) dig in with parents, 3) fertilize friendships, 4) rototill resources, and 5) get down and dirty with those served. “Planting Early” was covered in Part 1. Part 2 looked at “Digging in with Parents.” This time we focus on “Fertilizing Friendships.”

### Fertilize Friendships

It has been said that today’s youth are the most relational generation ever. They are interconnected and interfaced with each other through every piece of techno-gadgetry that exists. They seem to appreciate how valuable it is to keep in touch. Something happens to one of them and within seconds all know and can weigh in their support. This is neat. Because Christianity and faith are such relational realities, how could youth ministries better tap teens’ interest in being interconnected? Could youth leaders communicate with teens in the ways they communicate with each other? Could youth leaders help teens create Web sites, email, voice mail, or instant message networks to keep spiritual tabs on each other and other age groups? Good youth ministries will fertilize these friendships.

When it comes to other age groups, how can we better connect teens with older Christians? When I was in high school and wondering who I was and what I was going to do, four middle-aged men always sought me out when I was at church. They’d come up to me – sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, sometimes together – and talk to me: How’s school? Got a job? Playing church softball this year? Going to win the football game this Friday? Want to help me with Sunday school? How ‘bout dem Packers? They were not elected to be the “narthex-teen-greeters” and they had no agenda for me. But I can still feel their hand shake in mine. Their connection with me kept me coming to church. I actually looked forward to these guys making me feel like part of the church family and like a young man on a more equal footing with them. Good youth ministries will fertilize these friendships.

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### AND MUCH MORE!

Comments about this

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and ideas for future issues can be directed to . . .

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When it comes to other age groups, how can we connect teens with younger children. My daughter, now a senior in college, taught preschool Sunday school all through high school. I know that there were Sundays when her motivation to get out of bed and go teach Sunday school (especially after a late Saturday night) was more of, "My babies will be looking for me," than anything else. More than once I saw her light up when a little cherub would come running across the parking lot yelling, "Miss Natalie! Miss Natalie!" At a time when many teens feel kind of worthless, connecting them with pee-wees who will idolize them is very helpful. Good youth ministries will fertilize these friendships. Finally, how can we connect teens with adults in mentoring situations? Years ago, if I wanted to become a plumber, I apprenticed with Pete the Master Plumber. Sure, Pete would teach me all about pipes, wrenches, snakes, leaks, and flow, but as I shadowed him day after day, I'd also learn a lot about life and Pete's world-view. If Pete was a Christian, his faith would also be ever before me. Good youth ministries fertilize these friendships, too.

Christianity is more about people than programs, more about friendships than facilities. What can your youth ministry do to improve the connections of your teens with each other, older Christians, younger Christians, and "master" Christians? Figuring out the answers will cultivate a youth ministry that matters.

# Tree of Life Uses *Walk In My World* as Summer Theme

WELS Northern California Tree of Life Bible Camp made *Walk in My World* (WIMW) the theme for its 2005, six-day summer camp. Using the *Walk in My World* video assisted Bible studies as the foundation, campers grades 4-12 focused on their walk with the Lord in this world.

High school aged campers and instructors used the four WIMW video assisted Bible studies/discussions pretty much as they were designed. They supplemented two additional lessons for a special "overnighter" under the stars and the camp closing. The WIMW themes were also used for development of special Bible studies/discussions for grades 7-8 and grades 4-6 who also were part of Tree of Life Bible Camp. These levels did not use the WIMW videos. Evening devotions for the entire assembly were also correlated with the WIMW themes as follows:

## Day 1: Walk In My World: In Whose World? (Psalm 24:1)

- God's world – by Creator's design
- Our World – in accord with His purpose.

## Day 2: Walk In My World: In This World (John 3:8)

### *Correlating with WIMW Lesson 1*

- Satan's "claim" on this world and his destiny for us.
- Jesus' claim and destiny for us.

## Day 3: Walk In My World: In Parents' Footsteps (2 Tim 1:3-6)

### *Correlating with WIMW Lesson 2*

- Guided by God's ideal for family.
- Encouraged in our "real world."

## Day 4: Walk In My World: Along an Upward Path (Psalm 1:1)

### *Supplement to the WIMW Studies*

- Need to be aware: Two lifestyles - Two destinations
- Calls for Commitment to Walking with Jesus

## Day 5: Walk In My World: Heading for a Godly Partnership (John 2:2)

### *Correlated with WIMW Lesson 3*

- God takes you for his child
- God wants your relationships to be a blessing

## Day 6: Walk In My World: Getting Through Troubles (Psalm 23:4)

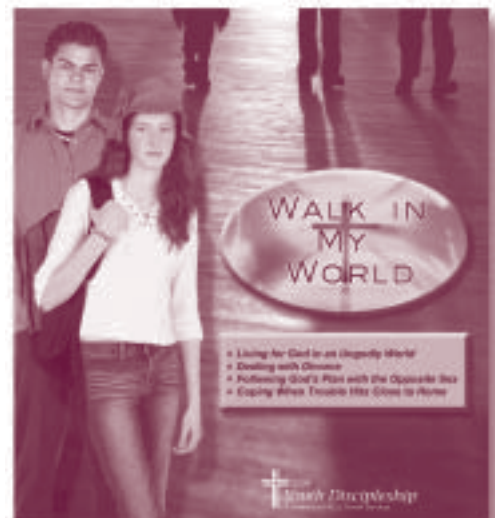
### *Correlated with WIMW Lesson 4*

- Walking in this world involves trouble
- The cross and resurrection are God's assurances that we are walking toward another world.

## Day 7: Walk In My World: Each of Us in Our Own World, but We Don't Walk Alone

If Tree of Life's adaptation of the WIMW resource for summer camp is of interest to you (and there is much more) contact Pastor Bob Hochmuth [rhochmuth@apostlessj.org], Apostles Lutheran Church, San Jose, CA

You can learn more about WIMW on the CYD website, [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship) in the "Consultation and Resources" collection.



# I Asked and They Answered

by Professor David Sellnow – Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

In the Fall of 2004, MLC pastoral studies college juniors were asked, “What do you think causes losses of young people by our church? Consider peers you know from your congregations who dropped out of church during high school or early college years. What factors were involved? What could our churches be doing differently?” Here are their responses (no hierarchy).

## On what they had witnessed among friends who left our churches

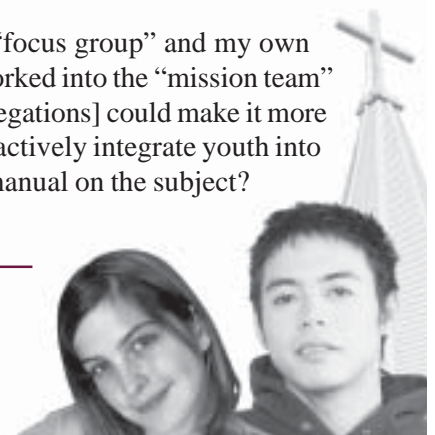
- They want to experience all there is to experience – which means a greater pursuing of worldly things.
- It’s a matter of priorities. They get into the party scene in college when they are out on their own away from parents.
- People are into immediate gratification – “I get what I want now.”
- Parents didn’t push it with them, not wanting to force religion. Parents were not firm.
- Their parents made them go in grade school, but then after that they didn’t feel they fit in within the church. They see it as a place for 50ish people and kids.
- They were forced to go to church when they were young, and stopped when the forcing stopped.
- One who was forced to go with parents through high school got to college and decided now was his time to experiment and explore other churches.
- Church got corny for them. Too much “campfire type” songs, as they viewed it.
- Thinking, “I can still be a Christian without going to church.
- My schedule’s too busy.”
- They’re not surrounded by spiritual nurture at public high school or public college.
- Life is a lot easier when not living as a Christian – you give up the old man vs. new man tug of war and just give in to the easy ways of temptation.
- Young people have a tendency to expect things, and veer away when their expectations aren’t met.
- Moving too far away from a WELS church (when going to college, for instance).
- Our losses are a reflection of society in general—it’s all about individualism.
- Teens are not necessarily different than others. We are likely losing adults too.
- A high school classmate (here in New Ulm) felt looked down on. (A New Ulm phenomenon where there are numerous “synod” families – an average lay member youth can feel like a lesser person.)
- For some it’s an “everybody a minister” sort of thing – wanting to do their own thing. (Talking about a friend who had baptized someone and saw himself as having sort of a personal ministry.)

## On what our churches could do better

- We need to show them vividly that they need Christ.
- Sermons are sometimes boring, not applied to our lives.
- Well less than half of the youth at my church are thoroughly integrated into the church.
- Our churches need to recognize youth as the church of today—not merely the church of the future.
- We need to find meaningful ways to involve youth in the church, not just to keep youth happy. Youth ministry is too much lock-ins and parties and not enough meaningful involvement.

The last three comments stand out in my memory as a consensus opinion among the “focus group” and my own very strong opinion as well. Ideally, every confirmed member of the church would be worked into the “mission team” of the church, beginning immediately in their early teen years. I wonder if [WELS congregations] could make it more of an emphasis and provide tools in this direction. Are there any of our churches which actively integrate youth into the mission of the church? Any leaders of that sort who could work up a workshop or manual on the subject? Anybody integrating youth in a general congregational setting?

*Editors Note: What do you think? Do you know of WELS congregations who are doing what Professor Sellnow asks? If so, email Dr. Joel Nelson ([joel.nelson@sab.wels.net](mailto:joel.nelson@sab.wels.net) or [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net)).*



# Wanna Be? The Alternate Summer Experience

by Pastor Jeffrey A. Bovee and Mr. Dave Stuht, Staff Ministry Intern, St. John's Lutheran Church - New Ulm, MN



I am pleased to report on yet another wonderful opportunity God has given our synod on behalf of our youth. Praise God that we even needed an *alternate* rally. It is truly a special thing to

see such energy in our Christian youth that they would fill up the "Wanna See" rally with numbers of 3,140 youth and adults!

The "Wanna Be" Youth Rally took place in Sandusky, Ohio on the dates of July 13-16 of 2005. There were 110 youth and 48 adults in attendance. We had 27 congregations, 8 districts and 2 countries represented!

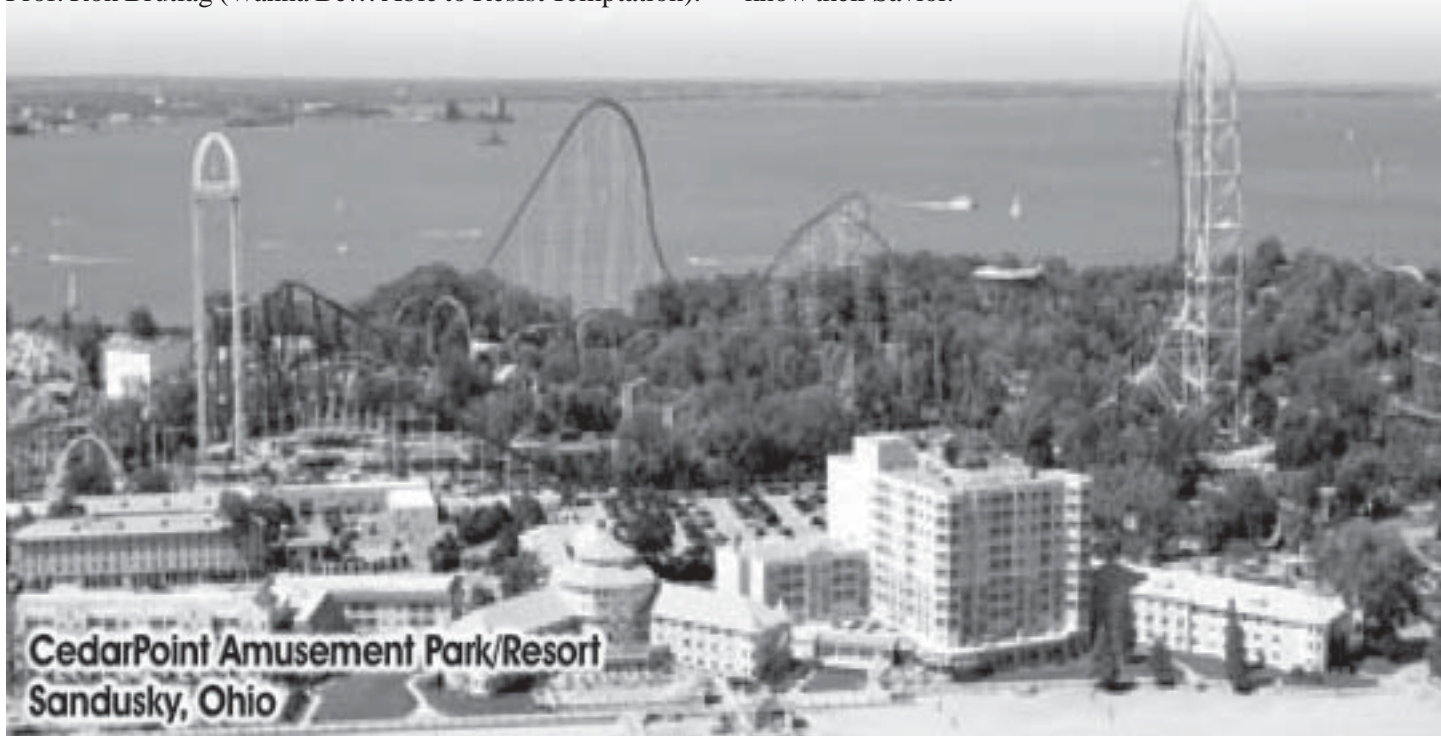
Our rally took place at *The Colonnade* where the staff did absolutely everything in their power to ensure a healthy and comfortable time spent with new friends in a family sort of way. Our presentations and speakers included: President Karl Gurgel (Synod work), Missionary Paul Nitz (Malawi, Africa), Pastor John Boeder (Wanna Be... Sure of my Salvation) and Prof. Ron Brutlag (Wanna Be... Able to Resist Temptation).

The rally-goers also attended Cedar Point- the #1 rated amusement park for the last 7 years. The park boasted rides that sent you 450 feet straight up, and yes, what goes up must come down! Another ride takes you from a stand still to a blistering 120 MPH in 4 seconds and then takes you up another 420 feet! We also could not have asked for better weather.

However, the real thrill was being able to worship together in the park, after it closed, without any other guests or noise/distractions. We used the *Compline I* service from the New Service Settings produced by the Commission on Worship. We planned our worship services throughout the rally to demonstrate to our youth that worshipping our Lord in the traditional Lutheran way (but put to a different liturgical setting) is quite powerful because it is Christ centered and leads us in worship to his glory and for the edification of his people!

When we had some "extra time" back at the hotel, we swam and utilized the game room! We finished our time of spiritual growth and strengthened Christian fellowship at a campground/lake where we were able to boat, swim, fish and do other outdoor activities.

It truly was a privilege and a blessing to provide this Christian service to our youth. We pray that they continue to grow spiritually utilizing their gifts God has blessed them with, so that they, through the Holy Spirit, may bring others to also know their Savior.



CedarPoint Amusement Park/Resort  
Sandusky, Ohio

# News & Notes

## Wanna Serve on the 2007 Rally Committee?

You can obtain all the criterion and forms necessary for nominating a teen for the 2007 International Youth Rally Planning Committee by contacting [CYD@sab.wels.net](mailto:CYD@sab.wels.net) or by downloading them from the youth rally Web site: [www.welsyouthrally.net](http://www.welsyouthrally.net). Nomination deadline is October 1, 2005.

## Consider Subscribing

Need some great ideas for discussion, activities, outings and more? Like freebies? Need resource ideas? Go to Group Inc.'s [www.YouthMinistry.com](http://www.YouthMinistry.com) or subscribe to the YouthMinistry.com newsletter. While not affiliated with WELS, WELS youth leaders can benefit from what's offered. Check it out.

## Past Issues

Past issues of *REACH!* can be found at [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship). Look in the "Newsletters Archive."

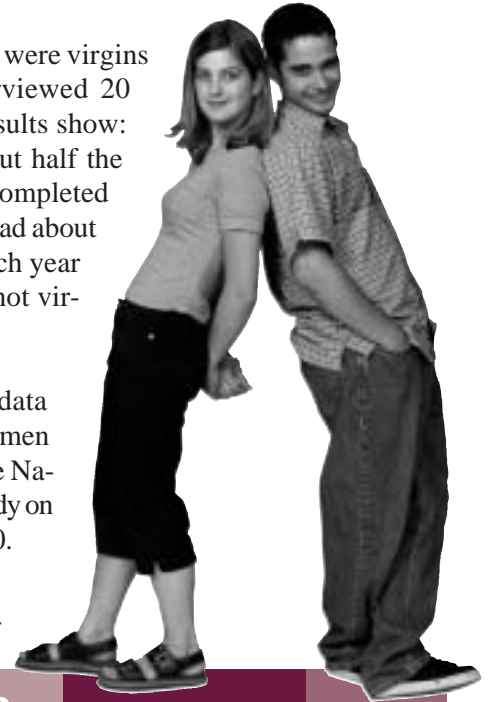
## Life Success Follows Teen Chastity

A study released in the journal *Adolescent and Family Health* indicates that chastity during adolescence not only avoids teen pregnancy and fatherhood, it greatly affects a person's well-being in middle adulthood.

Men and women who were virgins at age 18 were interviewed 20 years later and the results show: these people had about half the risk of divorce, had completed more education, and had about 20% more income each year than those who were not virgins at age 18.

The study analyzed data from more than 7,000 men and women during the National Longitudinal Study on Youth from 1979-2000.

*AgapePress News*  
Summary - May 2005



## Christian Life Resources, Inc.



Christian Life Resources (a WELS affiliate):  
[www.ChristianLifeResources.com](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com)

Also check out [www.sectionQ.com](http://www.sectionQ.com), the teen Web site for Christian Life Resources.

### Every 20 Seconds . . .

2 births in U.S., 9 children orphaned by AIDS worldwide, 3 divorces in the U.S.

### Every 40 Seconds . . .

3 deaths in the U.S., 3 weddings in the U.S., 1 U.S. teen becomes pregnant.

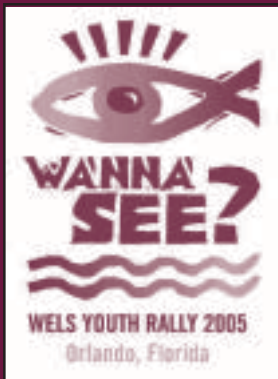
### Every 60 Seconds . . .

3 U.S. children die from an abortion, 2 diagnoses of cancer, 11 children in the world die of hunger.

Who will help growing families make God-pleasing decisions? Who can bring the message that would stop the practices leading to AIDS? Who has the resources to strengthen marriage? Who can help people mourning the loss of a loved one? Who can help teens live in a way that pleases God? Who can help Americans make God-pleasing decisions about unborn children? Who can educate and console cancer victims? Who can help those in need and share with them the message of eternal life?

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## Wanna See? You Shoulda!



This WELS International Youth Rally was enjoyed by 3,140 people (2,374 teens and 766 leaders). This was a new record, besting by 640 the old record set in 2003. 253 of WELS' 1,261 congregations (20%) have sent groups, and all 12 WELS Districts were represented with the following numbers of teens and leaders: Arizona-California 144,

Dakota-Montana 57, Michigan 134, Minnesota 623, Nebraska 66, North Atlantic 133, Northern Wisconsin 738, Pacific Northwest 36, South Atlantic 124, South Central 16, Southeastern Wisconsin 451, Western Wisconsin 618.

And there could have had even more! 32 congregations with 295 teens and 78 leaders could not be included because the participant limit, contracted a year earlier with the rally facility (The Coronado Springs Resort-Lake Buena Vista, FL) had been reached.

The 2005 International Youth Rally also benefited from the insights and involvement of Laura Merklinger-Littleton, CO, Lea Menning-Waukesha, WI, and Crysta Miller-Rochester, MN, the three teens on the 2005 International Youth Rally Planning Committee. WELS CYD thanked the girls in a special ceremony at the rally, presenting each of them with a plaque and a bouquet of flowers. Three new teens will be appointed to be part of the 2007 Rally Planning Committee (see more details in this issue).

The overarching theme for the 2005 WELS International Youth Rally was "Wanna See?" The idea for the theme came from the portion of Scripture selected as the rally Bible verse: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

You can go to the youth rally website [[www.welsyouthrally.net](http://www.welsyouthrally.net)] to obtain more recap details, order t-shirts, CDs of photos taken, and DVDs of the Bible study speakers and entertainment groups. You can also request an mp3 and sheet music for the rally song.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.