



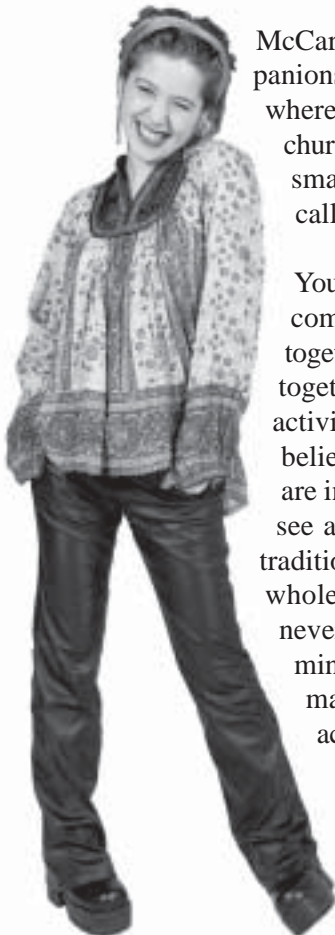
REACH!

Produced by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Commission on Youth Discipleship

From Youth Groups to Youth Groupings

by Joel A. Nelson, WELS Youth Discipleship Administrator

Robert J. McCarty has been in youth ministry in the Catholic church for 30 years. The last six years he has served as the Executive Director of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. McCarty feels that this generation of youth are very spiritual but tend to be “believers” not “belongers.” He says they are, “interested in spirituality and issues of faith, but are indifferent toward institutionalized religion.” McCarty asks, “What is it that [the church] can do communally that responds to the spiritual hungers of young people?”



McCarty believes that youth in this virtual age are looking for companionship and connection. He feels that many live in environments where adults are largely absent. The tremendous implication for the church, he says, is to “connect kids to healthy, caring adults...through small group settings in which youth can relate to adults.” McCarty calls them youth groupings rather than youth groups.

Youth groupings are, “small faith communities within the larger faith community which bring adult mentors and small groups of youth together around common interests, or involve them in service projects together, or engage them in the life of the larger parish, not just in activities that isolate youth from the rest of the church.” McCarty believes that the only good answer to the question: How many kids are involved in your youth program, is “All of them; you just never see all of them at one time.” Some youth may be involved in the traditional youth programs. Some may be involved in parish life as a whole (i.e. teaching Sunday school or singing in the choir) and never show up for youth programs. Some youth may be involved in ministries of parents and youth together (family camp outs). Some may be involved in parish sponsored civil and community service activities.

I think Robert McCarty is on to something here, and his ideas beg a question: What would happen if your congregation

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Comments about this **REACH!** and ideas for future issues can be directed to . . .

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“Walk In My World” Just What the Doc Ordered

by Pastor Jeffrey Bonack, St. Paul's - Muskego, WI

As Youth and Family Pastor I am constantly on the look out for quality Bible study resources for parenting and teens. Today's family is incredibly over-extended. If we're going to ask them to commit to a Bible study, we want to make sure that time is quality time in the Word.

Several months ago a group of teens and their parents from our congregation gathered for a midweek evening Bible study that turned out to be some great quality time together. Our resource was the Commission on Youth Discipleship's new "Walk In My World" video/Bible study. This was the first time we had ever brought teens and parents together into one Bible study. We weren't sure if we'd have much participation from the young people involved. They tend to clam up when their parents are around.

Yet, it didn't turn out that way at all. The video segments did a fantastic job of pulling everyone into the issue. They left people wanting to talk, especially the young people who could see that this Bible study was going to talk about real life—about their lives.

The discussion questions that followed were challenging and peaked the interest of both the teens and their parents. Real life answers don't always come easy. Unlike so many other resources that do a great job getting young people in real life issues, "Walk in My World," let the Bible talk. So many other "real life" study resources tend to be shallow when it comes to actual Bible study. Or they are so open-ended that the Bible doesn't give the final Word.

I have to share just one story. One of the "Walk In My World" sessions deals with teenage pregnancy. A family that attended the session had struggled through the teenage pregnancy issue just a short time before this study. Her mom came up after the session, gave me a hug and said, "Thank you!" It had not been easy for them, but it was reassuring for them to see that they were not alone and that God's forgiveness and love would continue to help them through it all.

Thanks for this great resource. It's just what the doctor ordered. Looking forward to volume 2!

What others have said...

"[Walk In My World] is the best video that I have ever seen produced by our synod...I really hope every congregation will get a copy. I have a prospect (in the process of becoming a member) that I intend to show the cancer [episode]. It is very real and exact...I wish you God's continued blessings as you help our teens and touch them with his Word."

Pastor Lyle Sonntag, St. Andrew Lutheran Church – Sacramento, CA.



Walk In My World...great for

- Teen Bible Classes
- Bible Camps
- Youth Rallies
- Teen Retreats
- Lutheran High School Classes
- Parents and Teens Together
- Teens Alone
- Parents Alone
- Community Outreach

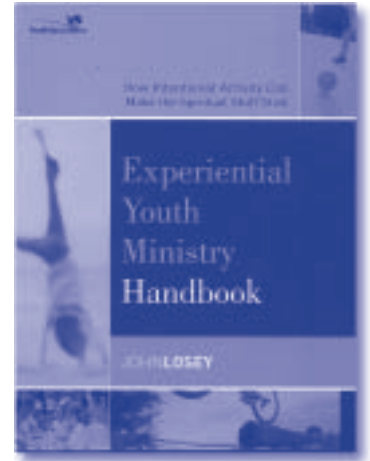
Order *Walk In My World* today at: www.nph.net (Order #38-3089)

Resource Recommendations

Experiential Youth Ministry Handbook: How Intentional Activity Can Make the Spiritual Stuff Stick

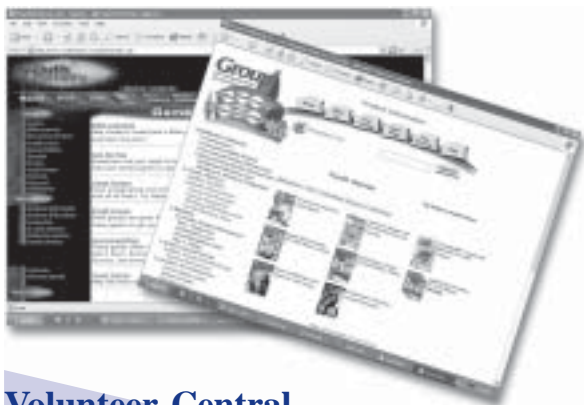
John Losey / 2004 / 160 pages / Youth Specialties Books / www.youthspecialties.com / \$16.99

Doug Fields, author of *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, says of this book, “Great youth ministry doesn’t happen by accident – and author John Losey knows it. In his *Experiential Youth Ministry Handbook*, Losey inspires us to use a combination of theory, action, and reflection so our students can learn in dynamic, new ways. A large portion of this gimmick-free resource is devoted to practical exercises and templates youth workers can tailor to their own groups. *Experiential Youth Ministry Handbook* belongs in the library of every serious youth worker.”



The first part of the book “Experiential Basics” touches on how meaningful and memorable education moves through a three-stage dynamic of theory, action, and reflection. If all three of these interact in what we do with youth, “the result is a powerful learning environment in which lives are transformed.” Additional conceptual information about the “Amazing Learning Loop” and how experiential methods are modeled in the Bible, bring the point home that how we engage youth in their learning has a tremendous impact on what they take away from the Bible lesson or youth group activity.

Part two of the book contains scores of great activities and ideas that bring the experiential dimension to life. Activities with names like Blind Thwacker, Webbing Circles, Name Toss, Warp Speed, Sea of Trolls, and Sherpa Walk provide great opportunities to teach and learn valuable Biblical truths. There are also sections discussing adaptations for large and small groups. Part three presents “Program Templates” or, “general formats and guiding questions that will help you understand how to use experiential methods in different ministry settings.” The usefulness of each is, “limited only by your own imagination.” Templates are provided for youth meetings, small groups, large groups, full day events, camps, and retreats. The last part of the book contains lists of helpful websites and additional book resources.



www.youthministry.com

This website, administered by Group, Inc., contains many resource ideas. Not all of the resources would be recommended by CYD, but you can get many ideas from what the site has to offer. Perhaps one of the neatest things is the link to different games and activities to use with youth.

Volunteer Central

Volunteer Central is an on-line resource developed and managed by Group, Inc. Its purpose is to, “equip churches to help people grow in their relationship with Jesus, by providing innovative and effective resources for identifying, equipping, and releasing people into their gift-based ministries.”

For \$99.99/year subscribers have access to:

- ◆ Online Background Checks, at member discounts, with Kroll Background America,
- ◆ Hundreds of fresh, field-tested ideas for recruiting, training, motivating and retaining volunteers,

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Have your teens take the first CYD Cyber Bible Study titled “God’s View.” It can be found on the LivingBold site <www.livingbold.net> in the “Links Lot” and then in the “Bible Study Helps” folder. It is really cool!



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- ◆ Access to a volunteer expert via phone, who'll guide you with any volunteer management issues you have,
- ◆ Thousands of articles from the volunteer experts,
- ◆ Customizable tools such as volunteer handbooks, ministry descriptions, applications, interview forms, and certificates,
- ◆ Intensive online training for specific volunteer positions along with self-graded evaluations,
- ◆ Leader-to-Leader message board,
- ◆ Automated electronic recruiting for volunteers,
- ◆ Online volunteer staff manager,
- ◆ Monthly electronic newsletters, and
- ◆ Dozens of pre-made forms for volunteers to use in their day-to-day tasks.

While not everything may have application for WELS churches, a host of ideas and insights are available. Mark Blauert, Staff Minister at Trinity Lutheran Church in Crete, IL and a member of the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship said this after reviewing the Volunteer Central site: "I think the site provides a great amount of practical resources. Using it for background checks was one thing that caught my eye. Samples of forms, permission slips, handbooks, and the multitude of articles can be of help. \$99 for a year doesn't sound too bad. I don't see any reason why we wouldn't tell our congregations this is a resource that could help them."

You can take a free tour of the site at:
<https://shop.grouppublishing.com/cvc/>

Need information about the 2005 WELS International Youth Rally?

Go to www.welsyouthrally.net or find the link in the "Links Lot" on the *LivingBold* website. Also, you can share ideas with the Rally Committee teens via email.

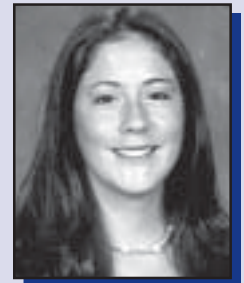


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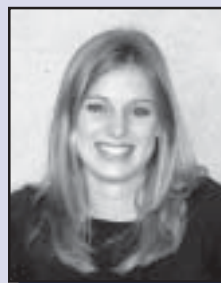
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A True Confession

Just got the latest version of REACH! newsletter. I confess I started reading out of obligation: I need to know what's going on. But then I didn't want to stop. Excellent encouragement about treating adolescents with more expectation and aspiration. The suggested resources look compelling. It's great to know you have some big plans and a talented network to bring them into reality. Though not in charge of our youth ministries here, I see this as an important resource for our youth leaders.

Pastor Chris Cordes, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church – Hillsboro, OR

Audition Shows A Lot of WELS Kids Care

On Saturday, June 12, 80 WELS youth from grades 7 through 12 auditioned to become the new *WELS Kids' Connection* on-air hosts. The audition was conducted at the WELS national headquarters in Milwaukee, WI. Teens who auditioned came from six different states: Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Upon arrival at WELS headquarters, the teens registered and received their name tag and audition instructions.

Then the teens, their parents, and whoever else may have come along, relaxed in the *Kids' Connection* "Green Room" until they were called into the main audition area. An abundance of snacks, fruit, and beverages was available in the "Green Room" for the auditioners to enjoy and to help them relax. The audition was divided into two parts. For one part, teens came into the audition area in small groups and worked through several group activities. The second part of the audition had each individual teen read a script before the cameras and the team of judges.



During the small group audition, teens were asked to do some individual improvisation. The "improv" helped the four judge panel to see how creative and comfortable the teens were in front of a group. WELS member, Steve Boettcher, who is an Emmy award winning television producer, and also the producer of *Kids' Connection*, helped the teens with their improvisations. The audition judges (Steve Boettcher and Kris Snyder-*Kids' Connection* producers and Bob Mateske and Joel Nelson-WELS Youth Discipleship national staff) rated the teens in physical appearance, stage presence, poise, diction, projection, spontaneity, ability to follow directions, and sense of humor.

Kids' Connection is a ministry of the WELS Commission of Youth Discipleship (CYD), and costs about \$50,000 to produce each year. Only \$25,000 is raised from subscriptions, so the CYD must find other ways to fund this exciting ministry. The final selection of the new *Kids' Connection* on-air hosts will be announced in the October episode of the 2004-05 *Kids' Connection*. In addition to new hosts, *Kids' Connection* will have new music, a new visual look, and a new website <www.kidsconnection.tv>.

Rescue Kit for Confirmands

by Wally Aswege, Member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church - Tempe, AZ

I have been a member of Emmanuel since 1960 and through out these years many young people have been confirmed. But over the years many of those fell away (they lost their way), although they at first promised to remain faithful through out their life. I remember in my own life I weakened a number of times, although I was raised in a very devout family.

In 2000 one of my many grandchildren was being confirmed. Although he been brought up by Christian parents, the Lord was bugging my conscience with the question: What would help keep him on the road to heaven? The words "Rescue Kit" kept running through my mind. Maybe in some small way something could be put together that would bring back the memory of his confirmation vows and remind him that God is still in control. This would be good to have, especially when he felt himself slipping away.

As it was a relatively large class it seemed fitting to make one "Rescue Kit" for each confirmand, although I didn't know most of them and the youngsters didn't know me. I took the idea to [our] Pastor, Gene Sims, and he thought it was a good thing. He even contributed a couple things for it. That was the beginning, and I have made a "Rescue Kit" for all the confirmands since that time.

As the years pass we have made improvements on the kit. At first it was all put in a 9x12 envelope. The last couple years it was put into a loose leaf binder with sheet protectors. The confirmand's name, in attractive print, and his/her Bible verse, all in color, appears on the cover page.

Page one is the index with color and art. Page two contains the "Rescue Kit" purpose as follows: *"If I should lose my way as I travel on the many highways of life I need only to open this book which contains my original vows and instructions that started me on the right road to my goal of Eternal Life with the Lord"*

Page three is the Lord's prayer. Page four this year was an *Open Letter To A Confirmand* by Pastor Gordon Snyder. One page had the Confirmation Sunday sermon and then also "God's Yellow Pages." Another page had a large photo of the confirmation class.

All of this was done in color and computer art to make a very attractive book. Finally, because we video tape the services,

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REACH!

("Rescue Kit" - continued from page 5)

a video tape containing the examination service and the Confirmation ceremony service was fastened onto the last page.

I thank the Lord for the privilege of bringing this to these young people. Apparently, at least some of them appreciated it, as I received a number of "Thank You" cards from the young folks. In my opinion, this would benefit them through-

out their life. I am over 80 years old and regret that I don't have something like this to look back on.

By the Grace of God we pray that these young people will remain true to the faith and in some small way, if they weaken, this "Rescue Kit" will remind them again that the Lord is still there for them.

To speak with Wally about the "Rescue Kit", email: wallya@cox.net

("Youth Groupings" - continued from page 1)

developed more "youth groupings" rather than the traditional "youth group"? Some youth coming to separate youth ministry activities, yes, but also youth connecting with adult members via teaching Sunday school, ushering, singing in choir, gathering food for the church food pantry, serving on task forces, playing brass or handbells, mowing the church lawn, helping on church work days, making shut-in visits, babysitting for church meetings, playing on the church softball team, reading a Scripture lesson, playing piano for worship, visiting small

children in the hospital, helping make banners, attending Board of Education meetings, etc, etc, etc.

Is it possible that youth involvement in our congregations is more a matter of adults' lack of initiative than it is teens' lack of interest? As you consider what your youth ministry will do this year, ponder the approach of Robert J. McCarty. Consider how youth groupings could connect more of your youth to each other, to adults, to your congregation, and to Christ.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.