

Freedom Outreach Newsletter

January 2014

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Get Involved!

Pray:

We appreciate & need your prayers! Please contact us if you would like to receive our monthly prayer updates.

Volunteer:

We would love for you to partner with us. Current volunteer opportunities are listed on the back.

Donate:

Our events and outreaches are funded by the generous donations of organizations and individuals. If you would like to support us financially you can make checks payable to Freedom Outreach and mail them to 3224 Appleton Rd. Landenberg, PA 19350 or donate on the website.

All donations are tax deductible.

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**Thank you for partnering
with us!**

Reflections on the Christmas Party

By Pete Richardson, a Freedom Outreach Volunteer

"Boys will be boys!" but sadly, when they grow up in the hood, all too early, boys will be "men," well at least our culture's perverted and selfish idea of manhood. The sad reality of being raised in poverty is that often times young adolescents need to make a choice between character and survival. They are taught by example and often verbally that being a man is measured in how hard you can fight and how many "thighs" you can score. Respect is not based on mutual love and honoring of each other but gained through fear and manipulation. The rite of passage into adulthood for some urban youth involves joining a gang and dealing drugs where they gain perverted versions of "family" and "financial security." Some kids are out on the streets dealing and killing as young as 13.

This is why it was such a bittersweet experience for me to lead a small group of boys at the Freedom Outreach Christmas Party this year. Because of a few no-shows, my group had dwindled down to just four boys; the oldest was 12, two were around 10, and the youngest was only 5 years old. They have all been a part of the ministry for many years and were comfortable with the expectations for the rules of the party. Still, they are boys, and they were all ready to run wild at the first opportunity. I'm used to being assigned the boys' groups at these events. I'm used to preventing and breaking up fights; I'm used to knocking down and building up egos; I'm used to chasing after the stray who feels disrespected because he didn't get his way. None of that happened with these boys. What stood out to me that day, and what warmed my heart the most, was the way they all interacted and took care of each other.

I saw a young man who acted more like a co-leader and a big brother to the rest of the group, but he did it in such a subtle way that it was hardly noticeable. Many of the stations are more appealing to younger kids; instead of acting above it all, he participated with gratitude and chose to respectfully help the station and group leaders. When it was time to switch stations, he helped clean up when necessary and was always ready to go. The other boys, with a little less self-control, kept their eyes on him and followed suit with almost every station. He never once told anyone what to do, but instead simply chose to do the right thing himself and encouraged others through his actions and attitude. Here is a child who will someday be a strong leader if life allows him to reach his full potential.

I also saw two boys from the inner-city on the cusp of adolescence who still had the spark and imagination of childhood flowing through them, yet were learning how to practice restraint and respect when needed. The four boys had the whole playground to themselves to roam free in, and I saw these two transform into warriors and explorers testing the boundaries of the world around them and testing the limits of the human body. In the moon bounce, I saw them transform into superheroes and pro wrestlers as they broke the boundaries of natural law with their imagination. During story time, I saw them work together to keep still and quiet, instead of trying to make each other laugh. At the art stations, they met each craft and drawing on their own terms, starting with the basic ideas, but then crafting them into their own art. One of them, if his self-expression is not smothered out by the struggles of life, has the potential to do something powerful with his art.

Continued on back...

Volunteer Opportunities

- Drive a van of kids to or from church on Sunday mornings. We will ride with you until you are comfortable. It is a great way to meet and minister to kids.
- Become a mentor or prayer partner.
- Play in the park in Riverside, Tuesday at 4:30pm.
- Bake a cake for a child's birthday.
- Help deliver cakes & meals to families in the city.
- Get involved in our annual events & fundraisers.
- Become a Freedom Outreach prayer partner. Contact us to receive our monthly prayer updates.

I saw a five year old boy, who already is facing some learning and emotional challenges and is being raised in a predominately female home, being pummeled at every opportunity by a few older boys and loving every moment of it. During the moon bounce station, I feared the worst more than a few times, but every time, he emerged from under the tangled pile of boys with an expression of pure joy on his face! He never stopped smiling as he bounced from corner to corner or followed in the other boys' footsteps as they all ran around the playground. I saw older boys choose to include him in their rough play instead of push him away. They both pushed his limits and protected him as older brothers would do for a younger sibling. Here is a child who will grow to overcome the challenges and obstacles in his life if he is given the opportunity to build strong, healthy relationships with Godly brothers and fathers who can encourage and carry him through rough times.

Freedom Outreach has been a part of all of these boys' lives since they were very young. All of them face the typical challenges of living in at-risk neighborhoods. All of them have the potential to choose life or choose death in the coming tumultuous years ahead of them. They all have older sibling who are making those daily choices right now; some are making better choices than others are... What these boys, and many more like them, need to survive spiritually is continued and consistent relationship with Godly men who they can confide in when they have questions about life. They need men with whom they can have the freedom to be boys in transition without judgment; men who will teach them by example and encouragement how to play and work with integrity. They need relationship with Christian brothers and fathers who are all on the same path of transition learning how to love and serve like the greatest man and friend of all: Jesus.



The game & thank you card writing station at the Christmas Party.



Singing O Holy Night at the Adoration Service.

Cookies, Presents... and Dinner!

By Judy Palkovitz, a Freedom Outreach Volunteer

It sometimes seems that everything happens at once!

That's how it was that rainy day, just before Christmas when it was time to deliver Carasmark meals to twelve families.

There were also about 30 plates of cookies, lovingly made and donated by VCF friends...as well as piles of presents that would have been given out at the Christmas party, had it not been postponed by a snowstorm!

The twelve seater van was stacked to the ceiling, and four of us were squeezed into the remaining seats as we hit the streets in the early afternoon. We decided to all go together, rather than divide the work.

The task ahead seemed more than a little daunting, but, as always, God filled the van, and our hearts with a rich sense of his presence. Not only that he was there with us, but such a feeling that he was so happy to be working alongside us, bringing gifts to his kids in the city. With each delivery we were welcomed warmly by the families. Gifts were whisked away, or hidden under the tree to wait for Christmas morning, kids watching, wide eyed with anticipation. Most of the cookies were opened right away, and dinners taken to the kitchen, most to be saved for a special Christmas feast.

It was a long day, finishing after 9:00 that night. Lots of rain, lots of stops, lots of visits, and many things to deliver.

...but through it all we had a blast! At the end of the day I felt that we were truly blessed by the Lord in a tangible way.

To be able to give into peoples' lives not only physical things like food, and toys, but at the heart of it all is that we were giving each person a little bit of the love of Jesus. The message that they matter. The God who loves them remembers and provides.

What a gift to be privileged to give. And what a gift we received in the process of giving away.



Ever wonder what becomes of all those cakes that our VCF family so faithfully bakes? Well, here is just one of the happy faces. Thank you for showing in a very real way that Jesus knows and loves us!