

The LIGHThouse

The online newsletter of Wildwood Community Church



January 2008

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Go WILD: Winter Edition!

"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." Mother Theresa



Sometimes I forget how a seemingly small act of kindness can actually become something of far greater significance to those it impacts. Take, for instance, picking up branches and twigs that had been tossed to the ground during a ferocious winter storm. This is exactly what several Wildwood members did on December 15th, 2007, for 11 Norman families.

As everyone in Norman knows, early December saw a devastating ice storm hit the city, leaving countless homes without electricity. The aftermath of the storm left many homeowners' yards littered with fallen trees branches. For many, the task of clearing away limbs and cutting back branches on trees proved to be too difficult for them to handle on their own. In order to be of service to the Norman community, Wildwood member Paul Riley organized an impromptu Go WILD: Winter Edition. Paul and a crew of 18 Wildwood volunteers helped to clean up 11 homes. They used chainsaws to cut down precarious limbs, moved branches to front curbs, raked leaves, and trimmed damaged trees.

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As seen in the following two stories, these simple acts of service in a time of need had a great impact on the individuals helped.



From branches to building a friendship – Some friends of one of the Go WILD volunteers knew of a neighboring elderly couple who had two large branches that had fallen down in their backyard. The Go WILD team cleared their branches and moved them to the curb. After the clean-up, the elderly couple began chatting and opening up to their neighbors who had alerted the volunteers of the couple's need for help. The neighbors said that in the five or more years that they have lived next door to each other, they had only seen each other once or twice. However,

Go WILD, continued

after the Go WILD team cleared out the limbs, the neighbors had visited each other over three times in a span of just three days! Who knew that a friendship could develop after a day of clearing out limbs?! Moreover, the elderly couple was so blessed by the Go WILD helpers that they donated some money toward a volunteer's upcoming mission trip.

Bringing relief after the storm – After finishing up at a house, the Go WILD workers moved onward to the neighboring home and asked if the residents would like help cutting down a large branch in their front yard. At first they said, “No thanks,” because they thought they were doing the work for payment, but after they clarified that they wanted to do it free of charge, the homeowners said, “Go for it!” The volunteers were able to clear the branch in about 5-10 minutes, and it would have probably taken the homeowners at least two or three times as long to do the same thing. Soon after they finished, the woman who lived in the home came back outside in tears. She thanked them and said that this was one of the only good things that had happened to her in the past week. Thank God for His kindness to this woman and her family in a time of hardship and need!



It seems that when we step out in faith to help or serve others, even in a small thing, God steps in to multiply and magnify our efforts by His Holy Spirit. Remember the story of the young boy who offered his simple meal of five small barley loaves and two small fish to Jesus to feed the massive crowd? Jesus multiplied the meal to provide more than enough food for over 5,000 people. This is the very same God whose Holy Spirit empowers us today!

Hopefully this story will encourage each of us to ask ourselves what we can do to serve and love others around us. Nothing is too small or insignificant. How can you make a difference today?

The Gift of Angel Tree

“God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing...” Psalm 68:6



Every year as winter makes its first appearance many of us begin to look forward to the Christmas season. We eagerly anticipate being reunited with scattered family members, enjoying warm meals and memories together. The brave of heart venture into crowded malls in search of the perfect gifts for family and friends. Our ears welcome familiar carols, and our eyes twinkle with lights of red and green. And what is the reason for all this excitement and joy? It is found in the momentous arrival of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us.

But for many the Christmas season is not one of joy, excitement, or family gatherings. This is often the situation that many children of prisoners find themselves in during the holidays. Angel Tree, a ministry within Prison Fellowship Ministries, was born out of a desire to share God's love and grace to prisoners and their children. The process begins when the prisoner contacts his or her chaplain and signs up with the Angel Tree program. Then, local churches and individuals purchase gifts on behalf of the parents. This truly is a blessing to both parent and child, keeping them connected.

Angel Tree, continued



Most of us are familiar with Angel Tree's Christmas program, which purchases and delivers the Christmas gifts; however, there are many other facets of Angel Tree. They also facilitate a mentoring program for the children and a camping ministry, as well. Wildwood member Ruth Musgrave has recently taken over the coordination of Angel Tree's Christmas program for our church. She says of her experience, "Angel Tree has been very rewarding to me and my family, because it gives us a chance to really help share God's blessings with those who have not been so fortunate. The innocent children of prisoners suffer, not only the loss of one of their parents, but also the income that person may have provided. I feel it is so good for my kids to see the contrast between how blessed they have been compared to other children so that they would be more grateful for what they have and more compassionate for others who are not as fortunate. Plus, what is more fun than shopping and seeing the smiles on little children?"

This Christmas, many Wildwood members bought and delivered gifts for 109 Angel Tree kids who came from 10 families in Norman, 42 families in SW Oklahoma City, and one family in Tatum. Also, Doane and Julie Harrison donated copies of 'The Jesus Film' and 'The Jesus Film for Children' to each Angel Tree family.

Ruth said she truly saw God's hand in Angel Tree, especially through the church Body supplying the gifts for the children and the smooth delivery process. Ruth said, "Despite the ice storm that happened during the weekend, all the gifts made it to the respective families in plenty of time...We had so many gifts to deliver! Each night I called several people ahead of time and put their bags in my van and took off. I also put others in my van that I had not been able to get a hold of and decided to take a chance they might be home...and in most cases, they were!"

One thing that I appreciate about Angel Tree is how it seeks to practically show the love of Christ to the children and prisoners in our very own community. It opens my eyes to the plight of those in need around me, and it invites me to actively join in the process of helping them. So, what can we do? How can we help?

Pray. Pray for the children, the caregivers (who are often the grandparents), and for the prisoners.

Get involved. Consider joining Ruth and others in the outworking of the Angel Tree ministry: buy gifts, donate money, call caregivers, deliver gifts, etc.

Consider volunteering. There are currently needs for volunteers and leaders with the mentor program and the camping ministry. Maybe you're the one to help in this capacity!



If you would like to know more about Angel Tree or would like to volunteer, please contact Ruth Musgrave at rmusgrave@cox.net.

A Celebration of the Arts



Words flow out of the poet's pen onto the page. The painter's brush sings across the canvas. Light and color are captured by the photographer's eye. The musician's notes soar into melody. Our God is a God of creation. His creative fingerprints are found everywhere, on the multi-hued petals of spring flowers, in the complex biodiversity of the earth, in the spectacular display of a thunderstorm, and the subtle beauty of a sunset.

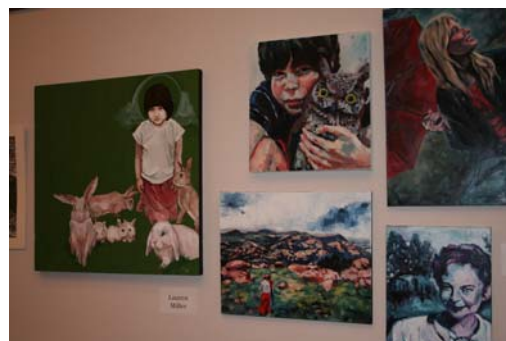
Not only has God displayed His creativity in the natural world, but He has also instilled within humanity the artistic desire to create. Throughout history men and women have been involved in the arts as a way to express their love and worship to God. In the Old Testament, God specifically commissioned artisans in the construction and beautification of the Temple.

This is why many members of Wildwood came together to celebrate on the evening of January 26th, 2008. At Wildwood's first annual Celebration of the Arts, 20 artists from multiple disciplines shared their work with guests and fellow artists. The night opened with Carl Sennhenn, a former Oklahoma Poet Laureate, reading and discussing several of his poems with an intimate group in the Gathering Hall.

After Carl's talk, attendees mingled throughout the room, viewing the work of 15 local artists. Photographs, paintings, quilts, handcrafted instruments and sculptures, drawings and books lined the walls of the room. Later, everyone sipped on hot lattes from the café and sampled tasty treats provided by the Family Fellowship group. Poets and musicians performed their original pieces one by one, sharing their melodies and words with the audience.

In the future, we hope to incorporate more of these artistic endeavors into the calendar at Wildwood as a way to collectively honor God with our creativity.

If you are interested in participating in future arts events, please contact Jina Schrader at jinaschrader@wildwoodchurch.org.



Small Group Signup



Throughout the Bible, there are countless stories of God using *people* to change the lives of other *people*. Whose voice did God use to influence King Xerxes to save and protect the Israelites from a dangerous edict? It was Esther's. How did God frequently provide David with safety and friendship? Through the ever-faithful Jonathan. What was God's plan for calling the Ninevites to repentance? It was to send a man, Jonah, no matter how reluctant he was. And finally, did Christ Himself live in solitude with no companionship? Of course He didn't. He drew to Himself a ragtag group of 12 and formed an even closer bond with three men (Peter, James and John). Clearly, God values community and frequently speaks and moves in our hearts through other people. After Christ's resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell and

empower His *Body*, a group of human beings who had been radically changed by God's grace. As a Body, we are exhorted to meet together in times of fellowship.

In view of God's design for community, Wildwood recently encouraged people to join with other believers in small groups. After both morning services on January 20th, members and guests circulated through small group booths and displays set up in the Gathering Hall. Each small group had a signup list and basic information about the group. If you missed the signup day, all of Wildwood's small group opportunities are listed below. Being in a community of believers is not only a blessing to you, but it is also a chance for you to be a blessing to others. Are you currently a part of a community like that?



Small Groups, continued

(for more info on any group contact the church office at beckyclark@wildwoodchurch.org)

Young Couples & Families: 20's & 30's

Leaders: Stan & Cheryl Schuermann and Tim & Ann Riley

Truth Seekers

Leaders: Jeff & Joyce Harwell and Julius Harrell

Koinonia

Leaders: Frank & Tammy Wesnidge and Mike & Julie Strauss

Family Fellowship

Leaders: John & Lori Abernethy and Dave & Fran Ryan

Ladies' Fellowship

Leader: Jill Brown

Men's Fellowship

Leaders: Bill Fix

Young Adults

Leaders: Mark & Kimberly Robinson

College Group

Leader: Tim Ferguson
and Garry Krueger

Women's Bible Studies

Leader: Joyce Harwell

Fit Together

Leader: Barbara Boyd

Update on the Children's Ministry

By Executive Pastor Mark Robinson



As you know, over the past few months, as an elder/staff team we have been sharing with you the vision for an expansion to our facility to accommodate growth in our children's ministry. In September we shared the concept with you via an all church letter. In November/December, we provided a handout and took an affirmation vote on the concept (the results of which were very positive.) As we head into Spring 2008, however, we wanted to keep the communication going with you about this project and give you some insight into the planning process.

First of all, it is important to remember why we are even considering such an expansion to our facility. We believe that God works through His Church to shine as His Light in the world. As members of this particular church (Wildwood), we believe that God desires to shine through us His light throughout Norman, our state, and even the world. As we consider how God would have us improve our ministry in Norman, we believe that increasing our capacity for ministry to children/youth is a very important "next step." Over the past month, our current space problems in our children's/youth educational space has been evident. Our youth ministry is standing room only in their youth room on Sunday morning . . . so much so that new people have recently looked into our youth room on a Sunday morning, could not find a seat and walked away. At the same time our youth room is busting at the seams on Sunday mornings, a quick glance across the hall finds 25 third graders crowded into a room designed for no more than 15. These are just a few of the examples of where our youth and children's ministries are at right now . . . and that does not even include future growth in these ministries. If our current trajectory of growth continues over the next two years, what is currently uncomfortable for our kids and youth will become obstacles to reaching more families for Christ because we will be completely out of space. It is our intense desire to see children and youth not just show up, but come into a vibrant relationship with Christ, but without more space, that would not be possible in our current ministry plans. We do not desire to change our values or ministry, just to allow our ministry to share the eternal value of Jesus Christ with all who God brings our way.

Second, as with any project of this size, there will be a financial cost. The next step in moving forward with our plans will be to undertake a 6 week long initiative that we are calling, "Pass it On: Lighting the Way for the Next Generation." This initiative will spell out many more details about the project to all of you, and provide opportunities for all of you to get involved through prayer, serving, or financial giving towards this project. This 6 week initiative is set to kick off on March 30, 2008. More details will be coming your way about this as we get closer to that day. As we approach that day we are excited for the privilege we have to be used by God to reach our community, and are looking forward to trusting God together with you over the coming months.

In Christ,

Mark Robinson
Executive Pastor

Wildwood Events and Activities Calendar

Major Upcoming Events

- 2/29-3/2 Pine Cove Women's Conference
 3/7-8 Michael Wells Conference
 4/11-13 FamilyLife Marriage Conference
 6/4-11 Mexico Mission Trip
 6/14-19 WildLife Safari

During the week at Wildwood...

- WEDNESDAY**
 5:30 pm WildLife (grades 6th-8th)
 6:00 pm AWANA
 7:00 pm Open Prayer Meeting (Room 227)
 7:45 pm Break-Away (grades 9th-12th)
- THURSDAY**
 9:30 am Women's Bible Studies

Sunday Morning Adult Fellowship Groups

Meet at 9:00 am

Young Couples and Families, 20s & 30s
 Fellowship Center East (downstairs)
 Leaders: Stan and Cheryl Schuermann
 Tim and Ann Riley

Truth Seekers
 Fellowship Center West (downstairs)
 Leaders: Jeff and Joyce Harwell
 Julius Harrell

Meet at 10:40 am

YouthWAV (Grades 6th-12th)
 Youth Room (downstairs)
 Leader: Dave Robbins

Koinonia
 Fellowship Center West (downstairs)
 Leaders: Frank and Tammy Wesnidge
 Mike and Julie Strauss

Ladies Fellowship
 Room 227 (upstairs)
 Leader: Jill Brown

Family Fellowship
 Fellowship Center East (downstairs)
 Leaders: John and Lori Abernethy
 Dave and Fran Ryan

Men's Fellowship (1st, 2nd, & 3rd Sunday)
 Staff Office (upstairs)
 Leaders: Bill Fix & Garry Krueger

The Heart Behind the LIGHThouse Newsletter...

Wildwood exists as a church to glorify God by shining as LIGHT in our homes, our community, and the world. LIGHT is an acronym that stands for the following:

- L**iving out God's truth
Invest in reaching others
Giving of ourselves through service
Honoring God through worship
Team together in relationships

To add events to the calendar or suggest a story for the LIGHThouse, email Jina Schrader at jinaschrader@wildwoodchurch.org. For information about any Wildwood calendar event, contact Becky Clark in the church office.

For more information about any of these groups, please inquire at the Information center upstairs.



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