

Testimonials Are Us!

VBS 2015, a Very Big Success



Sarah Krauss has faced a lot of “firsts” since she accepted the role as Centenary’s Director of Children’s Ministries. Each new responsibility faced in the leadership role has been a blessed learning. But, despite the successes and her preparedness efforts, there was one “first-time-ever” goal that gave Sarah real angst, Vacation Bible School (VBS). “I was nervous,” admits Sarah. She had never coordinated such a major activity involving children, youth and adults and she had lots of questions. Would there be enough volunteers? Would the children have a happy, learning experience? An event that needs a year of preparation, could they pull it off in less than 6 months?

Sarah looked to her Children’s Ministries Team and was blessed beyond words by the help and encouragement she found when its members Emily Henderson, Jamie Smith, Geri Cicchella, Julie Knipp, Ashley Oakes and Donna Meador joined her in making VBS a “wonderful time” for everyone.

Still, Sarah admits, “I was a nervous wreck the first night. So, I was so thankful how well everybody worked together. It was a major project and it really worked out. You could feel the love from all the volunteers.”

Centenary’s VBS competed with at least six other churches that held their programs the same week. “We picked Dead Week so our youth could have a role in VBS”. Dead Week is a week set aside each summer in Shelby County when all school and sports activities are suspended for a week to give families a break from the hectic demands of little league games, swim team training, band practice, etc. “We even called the other churches (early in the year) to let them know our dates so we would not compete. (Yet,) I’m sure they picked Dead Week for the same reason we did.”



Despite the competition, Centenary had over 30 children participate in the program whose theme was to help children discover ‘God’s Plan 4U=Jesus’ through science experiments and exciting stories. Sarah believes it was a bit of divine providence that Jamie Smith and Brenda Creamer, assisted by Sara Smith, coordinated the science experiments and Bible story time. Sarah says she was “amazed” how Brenda could engage the children through her story telling and the experiments Jamie conducted were a catalyst for success. It was rewarding, too, to see how Sara and the other youth engaged the children.

Sarah was impressed how well the adults and youth “connected with the kids. Brandon Hobbs,” witnessed Sarah, “carried the momentum of connecting with the children even after VBS. During VBS he was down playing with the kids, connecting with them.” He saw her daughter, Emily, a few days later and immediately took an interest in her. “It was so sweet of him. I thought how wonderful to see the relationship started in Bible School had carried on through. He was still engaging with the children.”

The evenings of activities, with music, crafts, snacks and Bible study, plus registration and keeping everyone safe doesn’t just happen. Sarah can’t say enough good things about how well her ministries team worked together. “Emily Henderson had 32 volunteers for VBS. So many of them said ‘put me wherever you need me’. A lot of work goes into plugging volunteers in.”

Doesn’t this remind you of a scripture verse? That goes something like this: “. . . But we know that all things work to good for those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Jamie Smith says as a former elementary school teacher she, “really enjoyed this year’s VBS program that incorporated the science experiments with the theme (‘God’s Plan 4U=Jesus’).” Jamie also loves how at Centenary, “everyone comes together and volunteers. That’s a real blessing we have in our church. We had plenty of help so we could follow the curriculum.” Jamie and her daughter Sara coordinated with Brenda Creamer the story and science experiment time that brought the VBS theme to life for the children.



Brenda Creamer awed the children with Bible stories while Sara, center, and Jamie Smith conducted the scientific experiments to reinforce the story message.



The VBS children were organized by age in groups to rotate through the various activities. Each activity leader could expect four groups to rotate through their part of the program. “We had about 15-20 minutes with each group,” explains Jamie. “Brenda told the stories beautifully (while Jamie did the experiments). As a former teacher, I was so excited to do a science lesson. It was so cute to see the preschool kids wonder, ‘how did you do that’.”

Jamie’s whole family was involved in this year’s VBS. Husband, Kurt, who was in charge of the music activity, but can’t lead a song, “turned it over to the youth” who had everyone singing the theme songs. As Jamie, who has been a part of Centenary’s Bible School programs for 15 or so years, says, “You just do it. You devote the time to make it happen.”

Experiments that used baking soda and vinegar to create carbon dioxide to inflate a balloon; or one that changed the color of liquids to represent how Jesus died to wipe away sin made, what surely will be, lasting memories in the heart and minds of the children, youth and adults who were amazed by them. Jamie came away from this year’s Bible school thinking, “Sarah Krauss is really doing an awesome job. She is organized and bringing in people new from the community.”

**Thank you to everyone that made Vacation Bible School 2015
such a SON “Sparked” Success**