

SIoux CENTER News

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Sioux Center, Iowa

Our One Hundred Fifteenth Year



Christ Community Church high schoolers (from left) Amanda Addink, Angel Addink, Nate Meendering and Zach Schutte carry boxes of food which they handed out to people during Urban Plunge in Lincoln.

Local youth participate in 'urban plunge' project

By Melissa Tagg

If they heard it once, they heard it again. And again. And again.

The weekend trip nine high school students from Christ Community Church took a couple weeks back had a definite theme: getting out of their comfort zone.

"We heard that phrase 31 times in the 44 hours we were in Lincoln,"

said CCC pastor of student and family discipleship Tyler Parson.

The event was Urban Plunge, an offshoot of the ministry Christ for the City International. The weekend in Lincoln involved helping out

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at several inner-city ministries and learning about some of the more dangerous sides of urban life. The trip took place during the second weekend in June.

Tyler and wife Mel said their hopes for the trip were to see students challenged to put their faith into action.

"Basically the goal was to be immersed in the inner city. We've been challenged by the idea that studying and reading Scripture in isolation is not all the Christian faith is about. It has to translate into action," Tyler said.

Serving, learning

Throughout their weekend in Lincoln, the students from CCC partnered with nine different ministries. But before starting out, they stopped by the headquarters of the Lincoln police department. Lincoln Chief of Police Tom Casady spoke to the group about the crime rate in Nebraska's capitol.

"He gave us an overview of what the crime scene looks like in Lincoln, especially around the area where we were staying," Tyler explained.

The group spent a couple nights sleeping in a soup kitchen located in one of Lincoln's more unsafe neighborhoods. Hard wood floors and noise made it a far cry from their Sioux Center bedrooms.

"Our motto for the weekend was, 'It can't get bad enough for me to complain.' The students realized that they got to go home, the people who live there can't," Tyler said. "It was a time for us to lean on Christ."

They spent their days and evenings serving in a variety of ways. They visited a senior center and spent one-on-one time with elderly citizens. They went on a "prayer walk"



The Urban Plunge group was scheduled to hand out food at the Zion Church in Lincoln on Saturday morning. However, when they arrived at the church, smoke was coming from the roof and firefighters were on the scene. The church burned down that day. Instead, the group served food from a nearby park.

around the city. They served food to people in need. On Sunday, they visited an urban church.

At each place they worked, they got to know individuals who are living in an environment far different from what the Sioux Center students are used to.

Stepping up

"The whole weekend I saw students step up. As a youth leader you teach and hope the students live it out and they really did that in Lincoln," Mel said.

One of the weekend's biggest shocks came on Saturday morning, the day they were supposed to help hand out bags of groceries at Zion Church in Lincoln.

"We drove up to the church and saw smoke coming out. Fire trucks

were there and people were crying," Mel recounted.

A fire at the church changed the group's plans for the morning, but not drastically. Instead of handing out groceries at the church, they relocated to a nearby park.

"It was a cohesive moment for us. We could've withdrawn or we could serve. It was a defining point for the students. And especially for them to see the people from the church, how welcoming they were and how loving, despite the tragedy," Tyler said. "It blew us away."

That same day, Tyler and Mel said they also saw students rise to the occasion during an activity in Omaha.

"Saturday night we traveled up to Omaha and served ice cream to



The group from Christ Community Church which attended Urban Plunge a couple weeks ago included (front from left): Ashley Schutte, youth leader Mel Parson, Kiki Addink, Lincoln chief of police Tom Casady, Amanda Addink, Jessica Langston, (back from left) Landon Nohava, Dani Doornenbal, Zach Schutte, Nate Meendering, youth pastor Tyler Parson and Angel Addink.

homeless people. After the ice cream was gone, we spent time talking to people. It was probably one of the more dangerous parts of the trip, being in the neighborhood we were in after dark," Tyler said. "But it was also one of the points where I saw students really reach out."

Tyler, Mel and the students talked to the people they met in the neighborhood, taking time to share the gospel and pray with different individuals.

"It was a time when our students really saw a need and saw a way to help meet needs," Tyler said. "And

when it was time to leave, it was really hard for them to go away seeing all the needs that are still there." **Now what?**

The goal of the Urban Plunge weekend, however, was not just to have an interesting service experience and leave it at that. The CCC youth leaders wanted the students to take what they learned and experienced in Lincoln and transfer it to their everyday lives in Sioux Center.

"Yes, part of the trip was to help us understand how good we have it, but the bigger piece is thinking about what we do now. Who are the

hurting or neglected people in our own community? How can we serve and be a blessing here? How can we be creative and even take risks to help people?" Tyler said.

For the youth leaders, that means planning youth events which prompt students to reach out to others. And for the students, it means taking the time and the initiative to, well, step outside their comfort zones.

"We're asking ourselves what we can do now as Christians here in Sioux Center," said Mel. "We saw students step up in Lincoln. Now it's time to do the same thing in Sioux Center."



Michael Ross, head of the Urban Plunge ministry in Lincoln, talks to the group from Christ Community Church. The group was assembled on the steps of the capitol building in Lincoln.



Christ Community Church high schoolers Angel Addink, Landon Nohava and Nate Meendering help serve ice cream to people in Omaha. The church group traveled from Lincoln to Omaha on Saturday evening to serve the ice cream.