

An Outreach Program That Works

Academy Students Express Enthusiasm About Community Involvement

By Cyril G. Connelly

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, N.I.V.).**

The faculty at Georgia-Cumberland Academy take this commission very seriously and believe that students and faculty as

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a team must share their Christian principles, concerns, and love by witnessing continually, not just on campus, but also in the surrounding community. We believe the philosophy of focusing on others will show the true spirit of Christ in our daily lives. Currently, more than 80 percent of the student family is involved in our outreach program, which has served as a cohesive force in uniting faculty, students, and community.

The greater Calhoun area is well aware of our students' community involvement. Last school year Georgia-Cumberland Academy students were recognized collec-

Left: Students in the academy's clown ministry bring cheer to a young patient.

tively through a yearly community award, which in the past had been reserved for individuals. This award was given for outstanding community help and sharing.

This article will briefly state the philosophy of the academy administration toward outreach and will offer examples of various activities in the program on our campus.

Coordinating the Program

We feel that there are three vital areas in any outreach program. These must be integrated and coordinated in order for the program to succeed.

1. *The Individual.* One faculty member must be willing to take responsibility for the outreach program—coordinating, scheduling, and promoting ideas. This job would seem to fall most naturally to the campus chaplain. Our chaplain, Elder LeClare Litchfield, fondly known as "Litch" to our students and staff, has consistently presented a well-organized plan and demonstrated an unflinching enthusiasm for community involvement.

2. *Administrative and Faculty Support.* No individual can carry the entire program, which should involve a large percentage of the student body. The sponsor needs consistent support and approval on campus. At our academy, rotating schedules of drivers, supervisors, and participants have supported Pastor Litchfield, and all staff members are involved in the program. This has been a dynamic, unifying growth factor for everyone at the school.

3. *A Well-Organized and Structured Plan.* With the exception of Elder Litchfield, no faculty member is constantly involved in the program, since responsibilities in-

volve a wide range of staff and student participation. To make the program more workable, it is scheduled during the same times each week.

Outreach on our campus stresses the dynamics of group sharing, with the important caveat that all outreach activities function on an elective basis. It is not possible to mandate the sharing of the Christian life—it must be a matter of choice. However, a great deal of time has been spent planning and presenting a wide variety of activities to appeal to the various personalities and life-styles of our students.

Varied Opportunities for Sharing

Activities from which students may choose include the following:

- *Big Brother/Big Sister.* This program occurs each Wednesday evening immediately following supper and concludes in time for dormitory worship. Students have approximately an hour and 45 minutes to spend with their little brother or little sister. Working closely with the local social services, the academy last year matched more than 50 students on a one-to-one basis with foster or underprivileged children from the town of Calhoun. Group activities on Wednesday night include swimming, crafts, puppet shows, and just being together. A few months ago one of the little brothers tugged on Litch's trousers and said: "I want to come to GCA when I am in high school. Do you have to be different to attend this school?" That was a sermon in itself. We have experienced a great deal of love and affection over the school year as our students have worked on developing a consistent, dependable, and loving relationship with their little brothers and sisters.

- *Clown Ministry.* This activity takes place once a month and involves approximately 20 students who, dressed as clowns, visit hospitals and homes for emotionally disturbed children. There they do mimes and pass out copies of the *Little Friend*, *Primary Treasure*, and *Guide* magazines. This program offers a great way to witness and brings laughs and smiles to the young patients.

- *Share-a-Loaf.* This activity takes place once a month. Whole-wheat bread is baked by our students and distributed in the Calhoun area, along with a missionary magazine. Over the past three years we have given away a total of 2,500 loaves of bread. The reaction of the community has been supportive and many shut-ins look forward to this visit from our students.

- *Jail Bands.* Once a month approximately 15 to 20 of our students visit the Calhoun City jail or Gordon County jail. Here they

sing, preach, put on skits, give away magazines, and talk with the inmates. The group participating in this particular activity has been educated regarding proper conduct during a jail visit.

- *Teach-a-Kid.* This activity occurs three times a week and is scheduled on a rotating basis for each student participant over a five-week period. Students are excused from their classes once every five weeks in groups of four to six and are taken by Pastor Litchfield to public elementary schools in the area. During this time they tutor younger students in reading, arithmetic, writing, or whatever tasks the teacher may request. The academy students thereby interact by helping children on a personal level.

In addition, this activity demonstrates the value of staff cooperation, as students are periodically absent from their classes, which can be disruptive. However, the

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a child prefers not to do so, he squeezes the hand of the one next to him, and that child continues the prayer.

Many first-graders or children who have transferred from other schools have never prayed or heard prayers in their homes. The teacher has a deep responsibility and a fine opportunity to teach these children how to pray. At first the teacher can say the words for the child to repeat. It doesn't take long until the child wants to "pray all by myself." I have often felt that the angels smiled at the sincere, heart-felt petitions that were spoken by some little one, praying for the first time on his or her own.

In all your planning for the worship period, in all your searching for stories, object lessons, new songs, and new ways to catch and keep the children's interest, never forget these words Ellen White wrote to teachers:

Your earnest desire for the present and eternal good of the children under your care should bring you often to your knees to seek counsel of Him who is too wise to err, too good to leave you in the helplessness of your own wisdom. If the teacher has learned his lessons from Jesus Christ, and has learned for the purpose of bringing these lessons fully into his own life, he can teach successfully. Those who are daily learners of the Great Teacher will have a most precious treasure house from which to draw things new and old.—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 183, 184. □

Community Involvement

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students recognize their responsibility to complete classwork and homework for the following day, and teachers cooperate in offering help as needed. This past school year we had more than 85 students involved in Teach-a-Kid.

• *Adventist Youth for Better Living*. This is a familiar organization on academy campuses. Last

year we concentrated on operating our conference health van and, with the help of area nurses, took more than 500 blood pressures at the county fair and gave away health-oriented literature. AYBL is also involved in a puppet program that travels to various high schools and elementary schools in the county and educates students in an attention-getting manner about drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

• *Bag It!* During this yearly activity our students go to the community and collect food to distribute in Thanksgiving baskets. This past year we gave out more than 300 empty bags and received a large supply of food that filled almost 50 food baskets.

• *Peer Care*. This program is actually an inreach activity. A group of our students meet once a month to share campus concerns and help their peers through friendship and listening. Christian concern can be truly demonstrated through Peer Care.

• *Church and Sabbath School Services*. This is also an inreach activity in which students are heavily involved in the planning and performing of duties in our Sabbath school and church service. Every week students teach the Sabbath school lesson, collect the offering, give the Scripture reading, prayer, special music, or ser-

monettes for the 11 o'clock hour.

• *Adopt-a-Grandparent*. This new program was enthusiastically received. Once a month students visit several elderly people in the Calhoun community, reading to them, cleaning their homes, and demonstrating their friendship. We have observed this to be a source of joy to both the students and the elderly people they visit.

• *Nursing Home Visits*. This activity is patterned after the traditional Sunshine Bands that have been operative on campuses for many years. Once or twice a month students visit the two nursing homes in town and sing with the older people, perform skits, and present a devotional thought.

• *Bible Studies*. This may be last on the list but it is one of the most important parts of our outreach activity. Students practice inreach by giving Bible studies in their own dorms, and then branch out into the community by holding Bible studies in the homes of interested local residents. The program has been a real inspiration to students who have been involved.

Many positive results of an active outreach program have been seen on our campus. Pastor Litchfield communicates frequently with the home pastors of our students by sending a form letter with a personalized note on the bottom

BIBLE TEACHERS EXCHANGE INFORMATION

SUBTEX, the Southern Union Bible Teachers' Exchange, developed out of a perceived need for communication and coordination of programs by academy Bible teachers and chaplains. Ideas for classroom projects and curriculum, weekend programs, outreach activities, and reviews of films and books are some of the items featured in SUBTEX, which is coordinated by Pastor L. W. Litchfield of Georgia-Cumberland Academy.

Persons wishing to receive SUBTEX or having materials to submit should send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to L. W. Litchfield, Georgia-Cumberland Academy, Calhoun, GA 30701.

letting them know what activities the students from their district are involved in. When students return to their home churches and find that the pastor has shared with the members what each of them is doing on campus, this has given the young people a real boost. We have also asked pastors to sponsor *Insight* subscriptions for students from their districts who are attending the academy.

In addition, Elder Litchfield has edited a Bible teacher's letter, circulated in the Southern Union Conference, entitled SUBTEX (Southern Union Bible Teachers' Exchange), which has encouraged the sharing of ideas for Bible teaching in the classroom and outreach activities on academy campuses.

Each morning, in worship, students are given an opportunity to write a personal letter to a friend on campus and have it read before the student body. Several letters a day are shared, which often deal with student outreach activities that have overlapped into friendships here on campus.

The results of an active outreach program are sometimes difficult to ascertain. However, I believe that students on our campus are committed to an outreach program and would be disappointed if it were not continued. They expect Wednesday night to be a special time in which there are no inter-murals; the gymnasium is open for general recreation, but the emphasis is that Wednesday night is for students to share, witness, and give of themselves.

Participants in the outreach program have a real feeling of accomplishment and are quick to share their enthusiasm. One of the senior boys who visited the local public elementary school as a part of the Teach-a-Kid program came back after Valentine's Day with a huge

card signed by all of the youngsters in the classroom where he worked. When we shared the card in chapel, students expressed many positive feelings about the program.

A recent letter from the Gordon County Department of Family and Children's Service sums up our outreach program: "We know that they [the GCA students] have freely given of their time and their energy and enthusiasm to help others when they could have been doing something for themselves. This generosity and love for their fellowman assures us that today's youth are not the self-indulgent, self-centered 'me generation' we read about." □

Transfer of Religious Values

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they had at least one Adventist parent.¹¹

How shall we interpret these findings? First, let us recognize that as teenagers attempt to "cut the apron strings" they have a tendency to put some distance between their values and those of their parents. A definite generation gap concerning values exists, with adolescents as a group being less traditional in the religious values they hold than are their parents. As a group, mothers are the most traditional, with fathers falling between youths and mothers.

In spite of this gap, youths tend to resemble their parents in the religious values they affirm. While the youths lean toward the nontraditional end of the scale, they tend to correlate with their parents on the traditional to nontraditional continuum. That is, more traditional parents tend to have offspring who are more traditional than their peers, although the youths are less traditional than

their parents. Thus, it is encouraging to discover that parental values do make a difference—indeed a most important one—even if parents may often find reason to doubt this during the struggles of the separation process.

Suggestions for Parents and Teachers

While this study establishes a definite relationship between the values held by youths and those of their parents, it does not investigate how this parental influence might be maximized. However, Hoge, et al¹² found that transmission was strongest in families where the parents had definite religious beliefs, agreed on them, and carried out conscious religious socialization in the home. Transmission was also strongest in families where parent-child overall disagreements were small.

Other researchers agree. From the literature we have surveyed—some of which we have included at the end of this article—we might summarize the factors that are most conducive to the transmission of parental values:

1. Parents themselves have strong religious values.
2. Parents agree with each other on the content of those values.
3. Parents live in harmony with their stated values.
4. Parents get along well with each other. They do not often argue and fight, but live in an atmosphere of marital harmony.
5. Parents operate a democratic family government, allowing input from the children and being willing to explain the reasons for necessary rules.
6. Parents are warm and loving toward their children and accepting of them.
7. Parents mingle firm control with high support. Discipline is love-oriented.