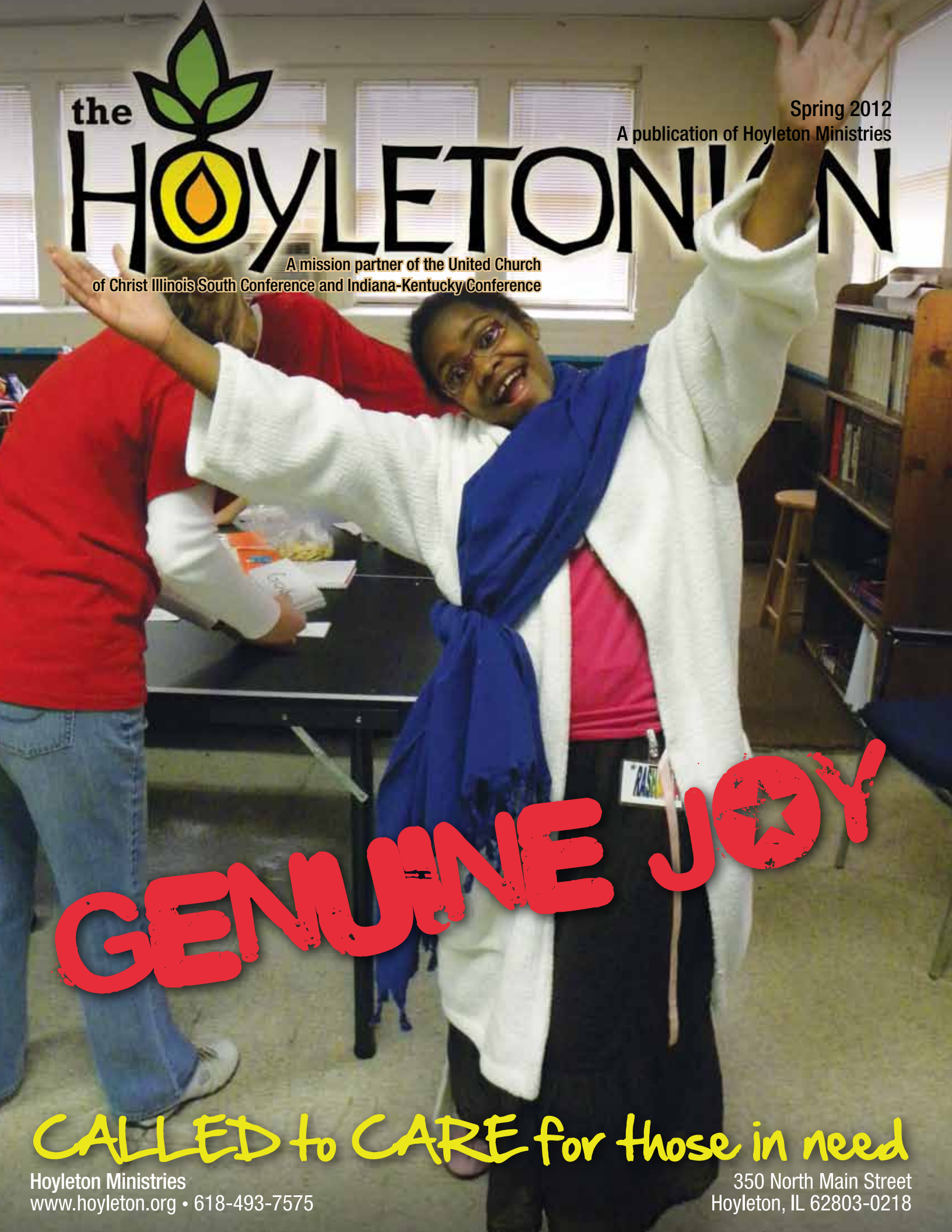

the HOYLETONIAN

Spring 2012
A publication of Hoyleton Ministries

A mission partner of the United Church
of Christ Illinois South Conference and Indiana-Kentucky Conference

GENUINE JOY

CALLED to CARE for those in need

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www.hoyleton.org • 618-493-7575
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A WORD from CHRIS

Friends of Hoyleton Ministries,

This issue of The Hoyletonian is perfect for spring—it just shouts the Alleluias of Easter! It is my pleasure to share with you these stories of our faith. There are stories of Christmas miracle makers who each added much to our understanding of "Christ with us" this past Christmas, and Valentine visitors who spread some love, too. Then there's the story of St. Paul UCC, Columbia who are transforming a room at our East St. Louis office into a room for therapeutic counseling toward hope and healing. These are just some of the stories of Faith in Action that we at Hoyleton experience every day. These acts remind us that we are not on this journey alone; but surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who journey with us.

Fortunately we also have opportunities to Live our Faith and this year were blessed with new friends through the Kids for Christ Bible Study—and what a gift it was! The Genuine Joy article is a story of the unconditional, extravagant love of God and a joyous song of praise. I am also pleased to introduce you to Miriam Evans, our new Program Supervisor of our Puentes de Esperanza (Bridges of Hope) program. I know you will enjoy reading more about Miriam. She will bring her own energy and vision to our care and compassion to Hispanic families and children.

Hoyleton Ministries was founded because of a group of faithful, committed church folks and their pastor acting out their faith in 1895. Zion Evangelical United Church of Christ in Hoyleton, Illinois celebrated their 150th Anniversary in November of 2011. It is fitting in this season of Eastertide that Hoyleton Ministries continues to live out our faith.

With Thanksgiving,

Chris L. Cox, MSW, LCSW
President and CEO
Hoyleton Ministries

OUR MISSION

Hoyleton Ministries seeks to enable all people, young & old alike, to realize the wholeness of life that God intends. This will be accomplished with the compassion of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit reaching out to meet the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social needs of those with whom we journey.

Puentes de Esperanza
Bridges of Hope

MEET MIRIAM

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EVANS

When you contact Puentes de Esperanza, you will find a new voice greeting you on the other end of the phone. Miriam Evans joined the staff as Program Supervisor of Puentes in February, and she's found a good fit there.

"God pulled me here," Miriam said. "My goal is to help people who need help." Miriam is originally from Colombia, where she was a pediatric dentist for 7 years. She studied many years to get her specialist degree in dentistry, and part of her training included a year of service to the country working with their most needy citizens. "I spent 6 months going on trips to the mountains, where people lived in the forest." She described a team of doctors and other medical personnel who would drive for hours, before continuing the journey on horseback to reach the most remote villages. "I carried my tools on my back on those trips. There were always a hundred or more people waiting when we got there."

Afterwards, she worked six months providing dental services to the poor in an urban setting before she received her degree. She says of that time, "These were people who really appreciated what you did for them. It helped me to grow in my patience, to help those who really needed help. I want to help those without resources"

When she moved to the United States, she found she couldn't be licensed as a dentist, and she went through a time of introspection trying to determine what she wanted to do next. When a friend in the Hispanic Leaders Group saw the listing for the position with Puentes de Esperanza, she passed it on to Miriam. With a little investigation, she discovered what our program was about. "I was astonished at an organization that focused on just the Hispanic community. I thought, 'wow, this is for me."

Though it's early in her tenure as Program Supervisor, Miriam has some ideas on where she'd like to see the program head. "We need to let people know what Puentes does and how to use it. We need to share our training and knowledge. And if we can't provide services that someone needs, we need to be able to send that person to someone who can. We need to decide what we want to focus on to move forward." Miriam also has an idea to go to Hispanic churches to reach the community. "They need to know we speak Spanish, and we can help them navigate things to get what they need." She added, "I'm American, but I'm still Hispanic. I've worn the same shoes they're wearing. I know the language barrier and I've shared in some of their experiences."

"I feel like this is my second marriage," Miriam said. " I have my first marriage with my husband and my family, and now I have my second marriage with Puentes." While many services at Puentes rely on being fluent in both Spanish and English, potential volunteers don't have to be bilingual. "We always need people to help set up at events, to escort people when they need to travel, and sometimes to sit with children when their parents need to be at a meeting. There's always the language of gestures. If you want to move a table, you don't have to know Spanish. You just move the table. When you want to help, you can find a way to help."

Miriam and her husband Kent have a 21-year-old son who is in his third year of college studying Psychology, and a 13-year-old daughter who participates in music and several different sports. We welcome Miriam to the staff of Puentes de Esperanza, and to the Hoyleton Ministries family.

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GENUINE GENEROSITY

Children Helping CHILDREN

We always appreciate it when someone adopts a Hoyleton child for Christmas gifts. We're especially touched when it's another child who reaches out to help one of our children. Eight-year-old Lilly Sitzes of Maryville, IL had an idea last Christmas to help out someone her own age. It actually started last summer, when she told her mom it would be neat to help out a charity. As Christmas got closer, Lilly asked again about making a donation to other kids at Christmas, and her mother Ginger began looking for someplace to make that donation. She found a lot of worthy charities online, but Ginger said she felt led by God to Hoyleton. She had no prior knowledge of Hoyleton, but said the whole process for her was about "getting to know Hoyleton."

Lilly had saved $37 of her own money for her gift. She asked for a contribution from her Dad and he donated the contents of his giant change jar, which totaled $73. Now Lilly had enough for two children's wish lists.

With the help of her parents, Lilly produced a flyer and a sponsor signup sheet, going far and wide asking for donations to buy more presents. Some folks gave Lilly .50¢ toward the cause. A next-door neighbor who didn't have children gave Lilly $50, enough for one child's Christmas wish list all by itself. All told, Lilly collected $400 from her church, neighbors and family members.

With the help of her sister Sophie and another friend, Lilly went shopping for eight Hoyleton kids on Thanksgiving evening. Ginger said, " I normally would have had them in bed by 8:30pm that night, but it was important for them to have the experience." They wanted to get the most they could with the money they had, and that meant taking advantage of some good sales. The girls stood in line nearly two hours that night with the mass of Black Friday shoppers to purchase all their presents.

Ginger added she thought the sign-up sheet and flyer really helped Lilly spread the word to others. "When kids own it, they can go to their churches, out in their neighborhoods and to their family to ask for donations." One neighbor saw the flyer, then sent her daughter along when it was time to deliver the presents. Another neighbor wanted to know more about Hoyleton and our adoption services. "It had a ripple effect," Ginger said.

When Lilly, Sophie and a friend came to deliver presents, they took a tour of the campus, staying to wrap additional presents while they were there. Ginger said it was such a great experience, Lilly is already making plans for next Christmas. Thank you, Lilly and family, for caring so much about our kids.

Youth Group Becomes WRAPPING MACHINES!

The St. Bruno Catholic Church Youth Group from Pinckneyville, IL visited Hoyleton last Christmas to help wrap presents, and boy did they wrap. The kids were wrapping machines, festively covering 300 presents in a single evening, fueled by nothing more than pizza and soda pop. The kids from St. Bruno's have worked with Hoyleton on several occasions, including painting the chapel steps one hot June afternoon. They were the recipients of the 2011 Youth in Action Award, and we value their energy and consistent support.

FROM THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI
to the doors of Hoyleton's Chapel

Last Christmas, Toys for Tots visited the Hoyleton campus on Christmas Eve, and they shared a lot of joy with our kids. The US Marines involved with Toys for Tots brought boxes and boxes of presents to our chapel, to the absolute delight of the children. The best moment had to be when the bicycles were unveiled.

The kids were so excited they rode the bicycles back to their cottages, with Marines following behind. Now our children have an enduring memory of a favorite Christmas gift, a bike, as part of their childhood here at Hoyleton. A salute and thank you to Toys for Tots for coming to Hoyelton and sharing these gifts with us.

50 BEARS!

Employees of the respitory department at Memorial Hospital in Belleville, IL gave some kids a special kind of healing this past Christmas with their donation of 50- count them, 50- Build-A-Bear's, complete with four outfits each. Santa delivered a bear to every child on the Hoyleton campus. Even now in spring, our kids are dressing their bears and showing care and tenderness for them. They are not just toys, they are a means of healing. Michael Urban, who lives in Hoyleton and works at the hospital, coordinated this incredibly generous donation. Thank you for sharing this special kind of healing.

Mission Team Brings Sweeter Valentine's Day to Hoyleton

Not every committee meeting can include icing and cookie sprinkles, but the Mission and Ecumenism Team of the Illinois South Conference UCC recently found a way to do just that. They held their regular meeting on Valentine's Day on the Hoyleton campus, for the express purpose of decorating cookies with the kids.

Committee members arrived with boxes of homemade sugar cookies and totes filled with toppings. The boys visited first, and they weren't shy about making double-decker gourmet treats covered from edge to edge with sprinkles. Some even had suckers sticking in the center of them like flags, to make them extra special.

John Holst, pastor at Zion UCC in Marion, IL and chair of the Mission and Ecumenism Team, said "it's part of our team's purpose to be here. We want to understand our partners. If you come to Hoyleton, why wouldn't you want to engage the residents? Valentine's Day is a good day for that." Team member Cory Hartz commented, "sometimes when we hear the word 'mission', it's a long way away, and really 'mission' is right here in our own backyard."

The girls were much more purposeful when they arrived to decorate, taking time and care to place each little star and heart on top of their cookies. And suckers, don't forget the suckers. More tubs of icing were consumed than adults would care to count, and the kids had a fantastic time. Sheryl Cross came along for the ride with her husband Dan, who is a team member as well. When asked why she came to a meeting for a group she wasn't even a member of, she said with a laugh, " Why miss a party? I had not visited Hoyleton before, and as a pastor in the Illinois South Conference, I wanted to. It's great to see the twinkle in their eyes and share in their joy."

All the kids made cookies for themselves, for their friends and for staff members in their cottages. What a great committee meeting, and what a simple way to make Valentine's Day extra special for our kids. Thanks, Mission and Ecumenism Team!

GENUINE JOY

It's easy to feel a bit jaded living in a world of reality television, ill-mannered people, political bickering, and a never-ending barrage of advertising. It's not too often you run across people who are genuine. Not the ones who flatter you to make a sale or have an agenda of personal gain- but truly genuine people. You know, those folks who are exactly what they seem, and who mean what they say. It seems almost like an old-fashioned notion today. But if you were to meet the women from Kids for Christ, you'd know you were in the presence of genuine people.

Shari Wall and Laurie Watkins are the co-directors of Kids for Christ, also known by their formal name, Kids Community Bible Study. Kids for Christ brings Bible Study to kids in public schools. For the first time this past spring, they brought their program to our

Hoyleton Kids, and it was a grand success. Kids for Christ has been around 18 years this past Valentine's Day, a symbolic day for the group because their message is purely about God's love.

They are a 501c3 organization that runs only on the commitment of volunteer staff who work 30-40 hours a week preparing to run the programs in 20 plus schools. Shari estimates she logs 50-60 hours a week keeping it all running. They use a non-denominational vacation Bible school curriculum, so what's normally a five-day program breaks out nicely into a five-week program for schools. Shari said, "ultimately, we're to bring God glory. When we serve the kids, we're serving God." The curriculum is for both the churched and the unchurched, Shari said, and they stay away from issues of doctrine.

Hoyleton is not like the other schools Kids for Christ visits. It was the persistent suggestion of Lou Garcia, a former Hoyleton board member, that eventually connected the group to our campus. After some discussion on the needs and histories of our children, the Freeburg-based group tweaked their material just a bit, and they came to campus with smiles on their faces and joy in their hearts.

On the last day of their five-week visit, Shari said their expectations for the program were simple. "We hope they leave knowing they are loved by God." The kids who came each week were different, depending on who wanted to attend and who wasn't dealing with behavior issues. On this day, there were eight kids in attendance, at least to begin with, and every one got a hug from each member of the Kids for Christ team as they came into the Hoyleton chapel.

The day began with a show of hands asking who read their Bibles the past week, and every hand went up. All kids in the Kids for Christ program get a children's Bible and a T-shirt, and both got a lot of use. Shari joked later that she always has Bibles and candy in the trunk of her car.

Next were prayer requests, and they were the most honest, direct prayer requests you could imagine. They were genuine. The kids offered a litany of things they were thankful for. One was thankful for the family and friends, another for a place to control his anger. And the list went on- kids said they were thankful for God, thankful for being at Hoyleton, thankful for the sunshine. It makes an adult pause to think of the difference between being thankful for what you have and longing for something more.

One of our kids was having a very hard day, and she asked for personal prayer before going to crafts. Her issues were so tough she nearly didn't get to come that last day. But she was there, and she was trying. As soon as the group split

into crafts and music groups, Miss Beanie took her aside for concentrated prayer time. It was a private moment to interact with God, heads bowed and hearts open next to the stained glass windows of the chapel, with that thankful sunshine pouring in, and with genuine compassion. And then, the student could fully start her day. That student later said prayer is peaceful and calming for her "Prayer is like talking," she said. "Through paper or through words, I'm talking to Him. I count my blessings every night."

Shari said they got one prayer request during their time at Hoyleton that was particularly hard. "One girl raised her hand and said, 'my father doesn't want me.' We're not therapists, and we can't change those circumstances, but we can change the focus to God. All we could say was, 'Your heavenly father always wants you,' and it helped her."

The six Kids for Christ staff buzzed around the Hoyleton kids like doting honeybees, spreading markers, construction paper and hugs around to everyone. These women came prepared for anything, with a pile of shoulder tote bags lining the walls, t-shirts in every size for anyone who didn't already have one, spare Bibles, and candy. With the help of Miss Jane, there were goodie bags lined up by name for every child, with gifts inside from each of the leaders, including McDonald's gift certificates, keychains with crosses and Christian fish, personal notes to each child, and headbands with each child's name sewn on them.

The kids focused intently, as only kids can, on the project at hand during craft time with Miss Jenni. They made small posters for their cottages that used the words they had studied over the past five weeks- compassion, gratitude, grace, forgiveness and faithfulness.

The last class was going to end with a short performance, like most vacation Bible school's do, and that meant there had to be some rehearsal time to practice the songs. Hoyleton staff joined the kids in practicing the hand motions to the lyrics, with laughs and giggles all around. They practiced songs singing, "it's not about you," and "you have the power to change the atmosphere," pointing at themselves. Miss Terry, whose been with Kids for Christ for six years, said, "when the light goes on in these kids, it's a beauty. The kids get God's love through us. I pray there will be a difference in their lives." When asked what she gets out of this work, she replied, " I get the blessing of working with the children. I get the blessing of being here. His hand is all over this place." She shared from a place of genuine gratitude.

When it came time for the program portion of the day, more Hoyleton kids and staff spilled in to the chapel to see the performance. Rumors of a pizza party afterwards might have boosted their interest just a little. One of our kids decided to join the eight who had been in Bible study all morning, and the ladies welcomed her at the table. At Hoyleton, activities are often flexible, and kids come and go as they need to, and the Kids for Christ staff took the new addition in stride. The only difficulty was when it came time in the program to sing, the eager student got up on stage with everyone else. But, she soon got embarrassed when she didn't know the hand movements to the songs so she covered her face. Miss Sonja, the dance choreographer for the day, quietly slid down in front of her, mimicking exactly what to do to the beat of the song, and the girl's smile returned to her face when she joined in again. A brief moment of genuine grace shared, then gone with the end of the song.

Part of the program was reciting scripture, and several of the kids had learned Psalm 25: 4-5: "Lord, show me your ways. Teach me how to follow

you. Guide me in your truth. Teach me. You are God my Savior. I put my hope in you all day long." One student said afterwards that this passage meant to her, "He can show me through the light, he can show me the path and I won't get lost."

There was a lot more singing and dancing to finish the program, and if you had been there to see it, you would have realized this wasn't really Bible study, and it wasn't really VBS, either. It was church. When our gangly teenage boys were dancing their hearts out regardless of where their elbows went, when our girls were grinning and waving their arms to the beat, you knew the sermon was on genuine joy that day. It was a message about relationships and caring for others that day and our kids got it, and so did every adult in the room. The kids were fully in the moment and they had genuine joy on their faces. As Miss Sonja said, "These kids rock!"

Kids for Christ brought a message of genuine joy to our kids, and it was heard. Every kid left that day with a song in their heart, knowing so many people they never met before genuinely loved and cared about them, and knowing God cared about them.

Kids for Christ follows Matthew 19:14 as a guide for their ministry: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." They certainly followed Jesus' words in their time at Hoyleton. These dedicated ladies bring their ministry to schools during the school year, and to a street ministry in the summers. Rather than wait until fall to do another five-week program with our kids, they're planning on being back for two Fridays in June, just to touch base and build a sense of continuity with our kids.

If you reach that point where your days are a little jaded, think about this Hoyleton moment, and what it means to have the faith of a child, and maybe you can draw on that deep well of genuine joy that abounds for us all. Thank you, Kids for Christ ladies. The kids and the staff can't wait for you to bring your genuine joy back to Hoyleton again. Amen!

If you would like to know more about Kids for Christ, please visit their website at www.KidsForChristKCBS.com

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Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Steiner
Mr. and Mrs. Randy Sisk
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Kampen
Mrs. Ethel Skaer
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Kurfman
St. John UCC
Mr. Harold Hirstein
Mrs. Jo Ann Steiner's Retirement
Miss Theresa Steiner
Ms. Summer Stephenson
Mrs. Kay Gaines
Mr. Kelly Verfurth
30th wedding anniversary
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Steiner
Mr. Robert E. Ward
Rev. and Mrs. Earl S. Crecelius
Rev. and Mrs. Loren Windhorst
Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Buldtman
Mr. and Mrs. Olin Zweck's 50th wedding anniversary
Ms. June Bronnert

"To err is human, to forgive divine."
~Shakespeare~
Please call us with any corrections or changes.

HOYLETON Ministries
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Hoyleton, Illinois 62803-0218

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Extreme Makeover for the Counseling Room

Our East St. Louis office has a counseling room that is the hub of therapy for the building. Youth from five to 21 use the room as a place to work out their troubles in a supportive, caring environment. Problem is, this room was rather institutional and sparse until just recently. That is, until some folks from St. Paul UCC in Columbia heard about it.

A crew from the church rolled in during the Pulaski school holiday to repaint the room and give it a much-needed facelift. Becky and Clyde Trexler brought paint, rollers, brushes, ladders, and drop cloths. Pastor Bob Goddard brought two dedicated teenage boys to help, Brett Volmert and Tyler Wood, who gave up their holiday to volunteer.

In short order, the counseling room was emptied out to the bare walls and everything was taped off. Clyde handled the roller, and Bob handled the cut-in work around the baseboard. Brett and Tyler took over the ladder work, and Becky provided the tools and clean up rags as needed. In just a couple of hours, the room was completely transformed with two coats of a warm, soft shade of white, and it instantly felt more welcoming.

Brett had recently discovered the joy of painting, and he thought this opportunity would be fun. "I thought it would be really cool to paint something and to help someone else out." Tyler also thought it was a good use of his time. "I was off school, and it seemed like something that needed to be done," he said.

St. Paul is also donating money for new furniture as well as toys that will help younger children through play therapy. They specifically brought crayons, dolls and dollhouse, puppets, stuffed animals, blocks, cars and trucks, markers, puzzles, and books from congregational donations- a tremendous help for future counseling. When the room's makeover is complete in the near future, it will be a welcoming space for children for many years to come.

The St. Paul Painting Crew, from left to right: Clyde Trexler, Becky Trexler, Brett Volmert, Pastor Bob Goddard and Tyler Wood.