

Our 3rd Annual Lock-in here at the Fremont Rec Center gave us 142 teens to minister to!! A crowd of diverse teens listened to the gospel preached and around 50 teens responded to the call. Our adults connected with them throughout the night while participating in activities with them like virtual reality games, knockerball, basketball tournaments, dodgeball tournaments and karoake!!! Thank you to all the volunteers who worked the night and thank you to all our Lock-in donors. Your commitment



Transitioning: The social, legal, and/or medical process a person may go through to live outwardly as the gender with which they identify, rather than the gender they were assigned at birth. Transitioning can include some or all of the following: telling loved ones and co-workers, using a different name and pronouns, dressing differently, changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents, hormone therapy, and possibly one or more types of surgery.

Transsexual person: A generational term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth, and seek to transition from male to female or female to male. This term is no longer preferred by many people, as it is often seen as overly clinical, and was associated with psychological disorders in the past.



CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

May 2018

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

This month I wanted to take a moment to introduce some phrases you may see on the news or in print regarding the issue of gender. We deal with a lot of young people who no longer believe what most of us were raised to believe: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

Today, the young people we work with are often struggling with their identity. Who they are can often change from week to week. Our staff teams are there to love and care for each teen God brings our way, even with these complicated issues. We try to bring the Truth of God's Word to a generation that has more information available to them in their hands than at any other previous time. Yet, this information has only seemed to blind them to the fact that a loving God created them and loves them. We ask you to pray for us as we reach out to a generation confused by a world as we lead them to the cross of Christ.

Here are some terms associated with gender identity that are commonly used.

Androgynous: Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

Bigender: Someone whose gender identity encompasses both man and woman. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are present.

Dead name: How some transgender people refer to their given name at birth.

Gender expression: The external appearance of a person's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined masculine or feminine behaviors and characteristics.

Gender fluid: A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender, and expresses a fluid or unfixed gender identity. One's expression of identity is likely to shift and change depending on context.

Gender identity: A person's innermost concept of self as man, woman, a blend of both, or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. Gender identity can be the same or different from one's sex assigned at birth.

Gender non-conforming: A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

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Create a Character | Matt Mountjoy

As many people of my generation and younger know, one of the first things you do when you turn on a new video game is create your character. Many people handle this differently, some create someone that looks nothing like them and have completely different names, some try to make super close replicas of themselves, and others name their characters after themselves but make them look perhaps how they wish they could look. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, it is a reflection of our culture's desire to be in control, not only in control but to even suspend reality.

It is no secret that we live in a culture that has pushed and confused our youth on many levels but particularly in sexual orientation and gender. On top of that, thanks to the sin nature of a fallen world, we as people have a hard time not being "in control." Our society pushes this notion that everyone should have complete control of their own lives and be who they want to be. It's often disguised as "be who you really are." The message can become "If you think there is something wrong with you, there must be, and you should even physically change who you are!"

I want to share with you about the realities of doing ministry where this issue is prevalent. Hopefully, as you can see as I share with you, the important thing to focus on is sharing God's love for His creation, and the Truth about how we are cherished creations by a God who knows and loves us the way He made us and only He can make us whole.

Very early on in my time at The Garage I met a student who was biologically a female, but by all appearances and by chosen name was at the time living life as a male. I could tell this teen was listening to the lessons and really thinking about things genuinely, and at the first opportunity they threw out the first test and basically laid out everything on the line explaining their gender identity. I could tell this was more or less a test to see how I would react, and fortunately I didn't take the bait. I kind of politely nodded and said, "Ok, awesome it's good to meet you, and we can talk about that later." While I'm certainly not an expert psychologist, one thing that I feel is important is to not get into a super deep theological discussion about one of someone's particular sins if they aren't saved. When you jump on that bait with someone who doesn't know you, and you get to the point where you are genuinely saying, "I love you but, the way you identify yourself is wrong", the person's natural self-defense will kick in. So, unless I'm pressed on the topic, I try to wait until the student feels that I genuinely do care before we get into the ins and outs of sexuality and gender issues. I wanted to mainly focus our discussions on, 'hey, we've all got this big problem and our sins keep us away from God and lead us to death, but He gave us a way out by sending His Son' and just share with her that love and message.

Three weeks and several conversations later, the time came to have *that* conversation, though. In that time, I had learned about her past and how much trauma she had gone through at such a young age. I learned that her gender identity seemed to change relatively frequently, and it was normally based on if there was a significant other interested in her. I learned that she had an awesome loving heart, but dealt with a lot of psychological and mental issues. On that day, in front of everyone at The Garage, she made an announcement that she would like me to enforce that everyone present refer to her as a male from that point on. It happened suddenly and right as we were about to eat. So, I told her that I would talk that through with her in a few minutes but first prayed and got the food rolling with everyone else and the two of us went off to the side. Because she had made this public declaration, I understood that she didn't mind others listening. We talked for about a half hour with others listening in, and I began with the news that I could not and would not do that. I explained to her that my goal was to share the truth and I believe the Bible is very clear on these issues, and I can't compromise with what God says. I also shared with her how I would never intentionally disrespect her or go out of my way to provoke her on the issue. But more than that, we talked about what the Bible had to say about God and His intentions with creating her. I didn't want to insult her by denying her wishes, but instead I pointed her toward the fact that her Creator made her to be her. He even knew the struggles she would go through, but He loved her nonetheless.

She wasn't a huge fan of the conversation, and while she was still frustrated, she understood why I couldn't compromise my beliefs on the truth with how important the stakes were. Because of the time we had spent in the weeks prior, she also knew that I genuinely cared about her and didn't judge her. The next day, she showed back up with a friend and introduced me to them as her "dad/uncle" figure. I can't lie, I breathed a huge sigh of relief with that. I was nervous that I may have pushed her away with the conversation, but ultimately what these kids need to hear above all else is yes, they are lost and have problems, but even more than that they are loved and being pursued by a God who wants them back. She never publicly pushed the agenda again, but we were able to have many more conversations about gender and what God had to say about it. And more importantly, we talked about how she was fearfully and wonderfully made by a God that has plans for her. A few years have gone by and while she still is working through issues, we have been able to witness an incredible transformation in her. She has gotten a lot of help with counseling and her other issues and she has opened up more and more to God. For the last few years, she has been not only living as her biological gender, but goes by her true given name. She now believes in the truth of being born a specific gender. Please be praying for this awesome young woman who has come so far already, but still needs guidance towards more truth in her life!

SPECIAL THANKS

It feels like our ministry site in Wadsworth, The Garage, has gotten a HUGE hug recently from local churches!

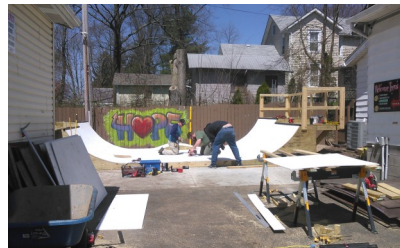
A big thank you to **Northside Christian Church** for having a work day at the Garage!

They cleaned and organized the outdoor garage space, the cafe kitchen and then painted our fence and spread mulch! On top of that, they made and installed a give and take box to help feed the hungry in Wadsworth!



A small group from **Wadsworth Chapel** helped stock our pop and water! Angel Callahan from Northside hosted a diaper drive! A small group from **Freshwater Community Church** fed lots of hungry kids at our Friday night hang out! And **Resurrection Church** changed the light bulbs to LED to save us some money!

Then **Grace Church** in Bath sent a work crew out that spread mulch in the back lot, spread gravel, made two picnic tables, and made some totally RAD skateboard ramps that **Jesse Smith** designed with input from the teens!!



Thanks to all you amazing people that help with the details so we can focus on diving into life with the teens!



Lastly, a big thank you to **Second Chance Tent Village** in Akron. We have been partnering with them and on a recent visit there they gave us a brand new dishwasher that had been donated to them to sell, because they heard ours was broken!!