

Real Life Retreat: We're Going Places!

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

- 1 Timothy 4:12

"1... 2... 3... Go!"

For half a moment, I wondered if anything would happen. Then almost immediately, I was startled at how LOUD the guys in our small group were praying - all at once - at the top of their lungs. I've only heard each of them pray once or twice before - mostly quiet, short prayers that displayed nervousness. Now, they were literally shouting their prayers so loud that I'm sure we disturbed the girls' small group upstairs.

We were in New Hampshire on a retreat with our Real Life Bible study group. Six youth - 3 girls and 3 guys - with 3 Boston Project staff. We are a diverse bunch of people all in different places, personally and spiritually. Some are committed Christians, a few are brand new to the faith, and others are checking out what it means to follow Jesus.

Both the guy's and gal's small groups were doing "Prayer Cards." This activity (developed by The Boston Project) is designed to teach us about prayer by creatively involving everyone in praying together. We pray for specific things ("WHAT" cards) in different ways ("HOW" cards) all based on examples from the Bible.

Of course, the first "HOW" card the guys drew was to "shout" our prayer based on Psalm 66:1-2: *"Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious!"* I cringed a little inside, knowing that even praying out loud in a normal voice was a challenge for most of these youth. Then the guys started asking questions: "So, do we really have to shout our prayers?" (*Yes*); "Do we have to have our eyes closed?" (*It's up to you*); "Can we all shout together?" (*Great idea*). After we covered all the bases, it seemed we were ready to go. Now came the moment to pray...

The guys blew me away! They not only filled the house with their prayer shouts, they prayed with compassion and love. As I shouted alongside them, I relished listening to their prayers for one another - prayers to graduate, to understand God better, for protection, and more.

The prayer time couldn't have lasted for more than a minute or so, but in the midst of this atmosphere, **I confessed to God that I had underestimated this group of teenagers** - their spiritual hunger, their willingness to seek God in new ways, and their care for one another.

Again and again, the teenagers impressed us with their depth and eagerness to experience God. Another powerful moment came on Sunday morning when we spent time celebrating the cool things God had done. Even though my spectacular fall on cross-country skis was a highlight for several people, we gave thanks for so much more:

- On the way to the retreat, we went to an art show to support one of our young women who had her photography on exhibit. She sold three photographs to support iSanctuary, a ministry that works with survivors of human trafficking.
- Many teens were willing to try new things outside their comfort zone; like cross-country skiing, a moonlit hike, new ways of praying, and spending time in solitude and silence.
- During an intense group conversation about how God answers prayer, one youth offered an inspiring perspective on why God may not answer prayers the way we want. Everyone was impacted by his words, which clearly reflected wisdom from God. He is a young believer, but we can see God is going to use him as a spiritual leader in our group. On Easter Sunday, he was baptized at a local church!

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- One of the guys shared that he wants to start following Jesus.

When we began our winter/spring Real Life Bible study series, **it seemed interesting that God led us to teach about spiritual disciplines (fasting, solitude, etc.) mostly with unchurched teens.** Little did we know what He was going to do! It's clear now to see how God is using these simple practices **to help move our young people closer to Him than ever before...**and their enthusiasm is contagious!

After that first round of prayer shouts, I wondered if we would need to apologize to the girl's group for being so loud. But before I could go upstairs, I heard shouting begin, and smiled.

- by Keith Riddle

Youth read up on what the Bible says about prayer (right). S. talks to onlookers about her photography at the art show (below left). Our Retreat Group Photo! (below right).



THANK YOU!

YOU GAVE generously through our 24-hour Facebook campaign to raise money for the Real Life Retreat, for a total of over \$1,400! We didn't use it all on the weekend retreat, so additional funds will support faith-filled programs; including special events like a trip to see Christian hip-hop artist Lacrae combined with a Gordon College campus visit. Watch later this spring for our next Facebook campaign to fundraise for our summer kids program at Elmhurst Park.
- Thanks!



news around the block



LISTENING PRODUCES COMMUNITY CONTRACT

Over 300 neighbors and stakeholders spent the summer of 2012 developing an action plan for community change. The resulting community contract was unveiled in March, highlighting several key projects The Boston Project Ministries will be involved in and/or support; including a Youth Jobs HUB, a new community café (Crossroads Community Café based on Jeremiah 6:16), and a neighborhood-wide greening effort called the Eco-Innovation District.



YUM... YUM... THANKS FOR THE SNACKS

Kids were very thankful for Newton Junction Baptist Church (NH) and their recent donation of over a month's worth of snacks for the Homework Center. This is a great way to involve your church in supporting missions.

COLLEGE STUDENTS GROW "DEEPER ROOTS"

We hosted 38 students this March on service-oriented Spring Break trips. Our Mission Trips Director, Nik Locker, commented on the first week by saying, "Two groups arrived from different schools and left rooted as one family. They left with a deeper abiding relationship in Christ and a greater understanding of Christ's character rooted in relationship, love, prayer and joy, and now from these roots a passion to serve as they return home. It was an incredible week!" Students volunteered as tutors, served at New England Sea Farers Missions, Salvation Army Jubilee House, and Starlight Ministries.

PARTNERSHIP TO REACH BOYS FUNDED

The Boston Project, in partnership with 3 other community partners, was awarded a significant grant to reach boys age 10-14 in our neighborhood. We will further develop our summer pre-employment program, plus add mentoring in the spring and fall with these boys who are often overlooked, but at a critical age. Pray for a partnership that honors God, and for an upcoming "showcase" where we hope to secure additional funding.



ROOKIE GARDEN OF THE YEAR AWARD!

Boston Project and TNT Neighbors United received the award from the Boston Natural Areas Network and Boston's Mayor Tom Menino. Congrats to everyone who helped design, build, and fund the new children's community learning garden.

BP STAFF AVAILABLE FOR SPEAKING

A number of BP staff are available to come and speak to your church or small group about The Boston Project Ministries. Your interest, creative ideas, and volunteerism are important. Contact Paul for more info (paul@tbpm.org).

...around the block again

Want to keep even more up-to-date with what's happening at The Boston Project? Visit our **facebook page** or **twitter feed** for more!

GROWING "DEEPER ROOTS" THIS SUMMER

The theme for the 2013 *Summer Missions Program* is "Deeper Roots" based upon John 15:4, **"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."** This year, our focus is to help youth seek a deeper and abiding relationship in Christ; reflective in the work we do and in the neighborhood where we live. We will be looking at specific issues of justice and core ministry principles that reflect our heart for Christian Community Development ministry at The Boston Project.

Ultimately, it's about relationship; these are the roots, first in Christ and then extended to our neighbor. Youth will have the opportunity to build deeper roots in Christ through worship and prayer. They will develop a deeper understanding of the city by experiencing its joys and struggles firsthand by meeting our neighbors and residents. Passion for issues of justice and mercy will be nurtured through creative teaching times and staff discipleship. We expect deeper roots to be extended through reflection and intentional action. We look forward to a great summer (and you can still join us!)



DO YOU KNOW... **WE NEED YOU!** GET INVOLVED



YARD SALE

Do you have hidden treasures? It's time again for our annual yard sale to raise funds for summer outreach programs. We need:

**Household items • Furniture
Kid's toys • Electronics
Clothes • More!**

Donations must be dropped off by Friday, May 17 (*earlier is better*).
Limited pickup for large loads.

Contact Liz - liz@tbpm.org



SPONSOR A TEEN JOB

Youth jobs are a key strategy in reducing violence, building character, and encouraging positive life direction.

This summer, we plan to hire 35-40 youth ages 11 to 18.

We need 10 sponsors for:

Pre-teen jobs at \$500 each (5)

Teen jobs at \$1,800 each (5)

Contact Paul - paul@tbpm.org



SUMMER MEALS

Summer staff get hungry!

Each summer, we hire an amazing group of young adults to run BP's large summer programs.

If you love to cook (or order out), **we invite you to donate a meal** for our summer staff team of 25.

Join us for a sweet time of fellowship, and a great way to hear a new perspective on the ministry!

Contact Sarah - sarah@tbpm.org



MISSION TRIPS

Is your church looking for a power-packed, meaningful missions trip for youth this summer?

We have a few more open dates in the 2013 Summer Missions Program. Call today.

The Boston Project provides an "all-inclusive" trip, with a dedicated staff and a Bible-based curriculum.

www.tbpm.org/smp

Contact Nik - nik@tbpm.org

Ways You Can Pray For The Boston Project

PRAISE GOD for a great Real Life retreat, recent baptism of two long-time neighbors, new community partnership to serve youth ages 10-14, outreach through 38 college students during spring break, new financial partners, opportunity to share at Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston's winter retreat, and for God stretching us in faith to "expect great things, attempt great things" for Christ (quote from missionary William Carey).

YOUTH JOBS. Ask God to provide funding and/or partnerships to hire 35-40 teenagers this summer. Pray for a new initiative we are championing called the Youth HUB; a strategy to increase youth jobs locally.

EFFECTIVE GOSPEL OUTREACH. This year we have increased our faith-filled outreach. Pray for transformation in young people through EPIC Saturday kids "church," Pretty Tween Girls group, and Real Life teen Bible study.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT. Pray for the Youth Council as they organize Boston Shines (community clean-up) in April, and Ball for Peace basketball tournament in June; development of their character and leadership skills.

BOSTON MARATHON. Pray for those directly affected by the explosions, including families in our own neighborhood. Pray for their physical, mental, and emotional healing. We thank God that those from the BP family who were close enough to see and hear the explosions were unharmed.

Please Pray



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Updates from...

The Boston Project Staff Team

We are inspired by our staff team! Each person has a unique story that motivates them to give and sacrifice themselves for the sake of loving God and loving others. This month, Percy Ballah, one of our Children & Youth Outreach Workers, shares about a recent event that touched on why he works with The Boston Project Ministries. **What has God done in your life that brings you to a place of giving yourself for others?**



Déjà Vu: The Little Boy with the Grocery Bag

Have you ever walked into a house and the aroma of food permeating the air gave you a flashback to your mom's cooking? The delightful smell triggered a memory that made you feel like you were living in the past all over again. This feeling is often called *déjà vu* — all of us have moments like these in our lives.

Recently, my wife had a *déjà vu* moment that I'd like to share with you. One day when Katie was picking me up from work, she noticed a young boy carrying a large grocery bag of food. He had gotten the food from The Boston Project's *Fair Foods* truck; which weekly sells healthy produce to neighbors for \$2 a bag. As we walked the boy home, Katie recalled carrying grocery bags as a child for miles with her mother and siblings from the grocery store.

Much like this young boy, Katie was considered "at-risk" because of the drugs, violence, and different forms of abuse that influenced her neighborhood. Statistically the odds of her being successful were stacked against her. Many of her friends ended up in gangs, prison, strip clubs, or made other poor life choices. But Katie's life moved in a different direction because someone intervened. For Katie, it was staff at the Salvation Army.



At The Boston Project, we also believe wholeheartedly that positive intervention in the lives of neighborhood kids will make a lasting impact on their future.

My wife gives credit to Jesus and her mentors for encouragement and support as a child. To me, this reflects the heart of The Boston Project. Our ministry demonstrates the love of Jesus Christ through initiatives such as a free summer drop-in program at Elmhurst Park, leadership development opportunities for teens, after-school homework help and more. At the same time, we also share with youth and children the hope found in Jesus Christ that everyone needs to truly succeed in life.

So, why do I work at The Boston Project? Well, when I see young people in our neighborhood, I see my wife when she was a child. Right now God has placed us here to help point youth in the right direction. However, we can only fulfill our work with your prayers and financial support. **Next time you pick up grocery bags, I pray that you will think of us and how we can partner together to impact more young people like Katie and the boy with the grocery bag.**

Your Son, Friend, and Brother, - K. Percy Ballah

SPECIAL PROJECT: BOSTON PROJECT - Appliance Replacement

Our *Neighborhood Ministry House* has older appliances, including leaking refrigerators. We hope to start a summer lunch program for children at Elmhurst Park, but need to upgrade to commercial appliances. The cost will be \$5,000. To donate, please note in memo "Appliances." **Thank You!**



Financial Update for the Ministry

We thank God for all the different ways He provides for this ministry! The General Fund is critical and covers operating costs for the *Neighborhood Ministry House*, such as children and teen programs, new gardens, and faith-filled outreach. **We invite you to give a donation today.**

▼ (\$25,000 - where we should be. With your help - we can get back on track.)

17% (\$12,850) Thanks!

Goal for 2013: \$75,000

March - April 2013



Neighborhood Ministry House

Recent Photos



Pictures: 1) Having fun on college spring break mission trips. 2) Youth rally at the statehouse for summer jobs. 3) Bagging food with neighbors at Fair Foods. 4) Teaching about Easter at EPIC Saturday kid's "church." 5) Enjoying snowstorm Nemo!