

crossroads farm

Down on the Farm

The Quarterly Newsletter of Crossroads Farm
January, February, March 2023

Jericho March

Over two Monday mornings in March, early, before classes began, at The Shed, The Lanes and The Mine branches, 59 students and 32 volunteer staff (coaches) met at 23 different schools across their communities for Jericho March, a prayer event based on Joshua chapter 6. They prayed big prayers for God to move in their schools, in the spaces where they spend their days, and in their friends' lives. They were encouraging and powerful mornings, and we can't wait to see how God will answer these prayers! 🙏

The group of MS girls took off running, laughing loudly, coming to screeching halts at the doorways to different rooms, sneaking into classrooms to pray for teachers by name, and then sprinting off to the next location to pray. You could hear their squeaking tennis shoes and excited chatter echoing throughout the building.



At another school, the CRF Coach said "I love doing Jericho March! I always challenge the students to take it as a training that they should apply to their daily walks through the school. And, I wore my new CRF jacket!" (he recently earned his 5 year coach jacket at Winter Retreat.)



"...we had a really good time of prayer! The kids really seem to care a lot for their school and peers."



At one school, no students came. But the CRF Coach sent this message- "It was still a nice morning out there. They've had a rougher couple months with lock downs (from threats of various kinds)."

"It was incredible to get to pray with our students this morning. I was expecting them to be tired, but they came ready to go. I'm excited to see them continue to develop a deeper care for their school and the people around them."



5 MS girls (and one junior guy) met at their school for Jericho March. As soon as we walked in the door, the principal exclaimed "This is great! Can you guys come pray every week?"



At one school the CRF Coach in charge sent us a picture of their group. In the text, he said "Here is a picture. We had another student (Jim*) but he refused to be in a picture." Jim is one of the "back wall students"- he comes to CRF, but acts like a loner. How amazing that he showed up to pray for his school!



One staff member asked a student how they could pray specifically for their school, one responded, "The food in the cafeteria!"



Talk about epic! Batman and Robin, Pumbaa, Timon and Simba, Randolph and Frodo, Bob and Larry, DC, Marvel, Star Wars and fairies, unicorns and video game heroes, amassed at The CRF ComicCon Winter Retreat. 265 arrived at Michindoh Conference Grounds from three separate branches on seven busses, four vans, five trailers and many cars. Michindoh worked overtime to provide for what God was going to do!



This year's event was saddled with additional challenges; Hillsdale County had been without power for the better part of three days. The Dave Mead Band, our incredible worship leaders, set up stage and lights, ironically, in a semi-dark room. Levi Koistra, our speaker, had been so excited about this opportunity that he arrived a week early (and then again on time for the event).

By the time it all began, a dull hum was heard across the Conference as 17 generators powered heat, lights, cabins and kitchen facilities. The collection of CRF people would not have been aware of the



lack of power as the countdown video, incredible stage decor, opening skits, powerful worship and a spiritual challenge went off with little interruption! And then the light came on. Both literally and spiritually. As our mailing list prayed for each participant by name, many gave in order to make sure that every person who wanted to could afford to come. Thank you.

On Saturday evening, 15 students began a relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

One coach volunteer had mad skills to get a whole cabin of MS guys to be in bed and quiet before lights out!



"There was a girl in my care cell that I had been praying for for years, and came to Winter Retreat. And we later found out she chose to follow Christ during Retreat!"



"My whole life I've been pushed towards hell. But you guys are nudging me towards the good side."

Two sisters came up and gave one pro staff missionary, who had invested greatly in the relationship, a big hug because they were so happy their half brother chose to follow Christ.



Landon is an athletic, well liked senior. Before retreat, he had never met Larry. Larry is new to CRF and is an incredibly reserved freshman from a different school. But in a moment, of help needed during ice skating, they bonded.



Later, during retreat, Larry was brave enough to go to the front of the packed room and participate fully during worship.

"I'm a pastor's kid, but I've never led anyone to Christ. Now at 20yrs old, it happened... with a student I didn't know before this weekend but was 'randomly' put in my cabin."



One coach volunteer plunged the toilet in the guys cabin for 20 mins!

"I knew God had been preparing my heart for the weekend. My girl's asked me some hard questions that I was ready to answer. It was a cool opportunity to share that God wants more for them."

Baptisms

Sunday, March 19, was a day full of rejoicing! Students making public professions of their desire to follow Jesus in front of family, church family and their peers through baptism. The Shed branch celebrated six students taking the next step in their faith to be baptized. It was an honor and a joy. The Mine branch had one of their students that was baptised at one of our RCI (Rural Church Initiative-CRF is their outsourced cooperative youth ministry) on the same Sunday! All three branches turned to Jesus' words from John 14 that day for our continued school year teaching on the Red Letter Words of Jesus, and were reminded of the powerful hope we have in Jesus being the Way, the Truth and the Life. 🙏



"My friend introduced me to a really amazing family at Crossroads, and then she dragged me to the Murder Mystery Outreach. That day something clicked. I've felt different ever since. And felt connected to God in a way I never have before. I've felt safe and at peace under his protection. I'm getting baptized today to proclaim my love for Him and strengthen my relationship with him."



"Nick" was a MS guy who chose to get baptized. He accepted Christ at Winter Retreat, and is the little brother of one of our Leadteam Coaches (adult volunteers), who had been praying for Landon for years. He got to be on stage when Landon got baptized, and gave him a giant hug, whooping and hollering, afterwards. Landon then immediately came into the main room, dripping wet, because "I wanted to see everyone else get baptized too!"



One MS student kept asking our Ministry Director, "But how long am I going to be under the water?" Jack's comment during staff meeting: "The kid was willing to be drowned for Jesus."

5 & 10 Year Jackets

Philippians 1:21a "For to me, to live is Christ (He is my source of joy, my reason to live)"



A Coach (adult volunteer that works with a carecell/small group of students) received 60 hrs of training each school year in our ARMS of

a Servant Leader training. They volunteer five hours each week, three as a part of our program(s) and the other two either in training or investing in their students where they live...attending their games, seeing their 4H projects, attending their concerts or productions, hanging out over hot chocolate or any number of relational activities. At this year's winter retreat, we honored and awarded those who have been serving with the ministry for five consecutive years with green sleeved letter jackets. For those who have been with Crossroads Farm for 10 plus

years, white sleeved letter jackets were awarded. Please pray that all those that work with our students across our branches would live with Christ as their source and reason, and that they would love the rural teen both with and for Him. 🙏





From the President

“Door Post Markings”

March 2023



weighing in at 6 pounds, 11 ounces, joined us at 9:10 a.m. on a Wednesday morning in March. The markings he added were etched into our hearts. Growth. A new chapter in our lives and a new book for him.

This CRF season has been no different than my personal life. Growth. Story. Promise. Fulfillment.

The month of February was on us! This of course means Winter Retreat season. I was given the opportunity to speak at two different winter retreats this past winter. It has always been a special type of enjoyment for me, mostly because I contend there are no more enthusiastic crowds than a room of students! This year, however, was fraught with additional challenges. Dawn began dealing with fairly severe pain, and headed into the hospital where she was told her gallbladder needed to come out. As she waited in her hospital bed, the county went dark! Literally, Hillsdale County was ushered into



a 100% power outage. After waiting, sometimes in a hallway, it became apparent the lights were not going to come on for her surgery and the hospital sent her home.

We left the hospital in order to join our amazing CRF team at Michindoh. God had graciously allowed Dawn's pain to subside, and she assisted in the preparations for our annual winter retreat. The preparations were done in a powerless environment. Michindoh began to make plans to heat and light cabins with generators. The main meeting space would also have to use five large generators to power the lights and sound for our main session. Then God did something unexpected.

The power stayed off, which allowed many students who had planned to be involved in other school events to come. When the retreat began, 265 participants had flooded Michindoh's gym and CRF's 23rd winter retreat roared to life! All three branches of Crossroads Farm were in attendance and the night couldn't have gone better. Until partial power flickered back on, camp wide.

The reason we never cancel events is because our God always shows up, and on Saturday evening, 15 students made decisions to follow Jesus with their lives.

On the following Wednesday, Dawn had her surgery and on the following Friday we headed to Barakel to speak for another retreat. Dawn was determined to go, because God, again, was determined to show up. On the following weekend an additional dozen or so students began their relationship with Jesus.

We left Camp, headed to a church close by and worshipped our Father with tears streaming down our faces. Have I mentioned to you that God is good. On Sunday night, we joined our Lanes branch in Kalkaska for their ministry program. On Monday, after a day in the Kalkaska

We generally all have stories about the measurements, complete with names and dates, hidden inside a door frame somewhere in our homes or memories. The Routledge's have a series of these markings inside a garage door. Some of the years, the etchings barely move, some years are astounding as to the differences a year brings. Each mark bears a story of a particular season. It is celebration, nostalgia and hopeful optimism signified by each horizontal line. Each is representative of growth.

Many of the greatest growth markers are not written on door frames. Most are stored up in our hearts.

This past week, Dawn and I celebrated a significant event in our lives as we became grandparents. My daughter, Raegan, and her husband gave birth to their first child. His name is Ezekiel Allen Marshall and he is fearfully and wonderfully made. A hair 19.34 inches and



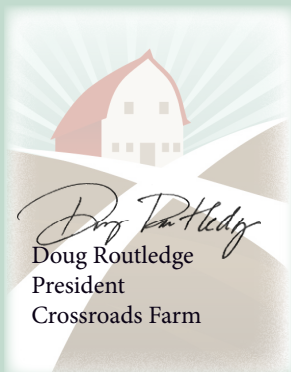
office, assessing their ongoing building campaign, mission and vision, we left for home, full, humbled, hopeful... One short week at the Hillsdale Office, a night with the Shed Staff at their ministry programs and we were traveling to Harrison County for the birth of our grandson. What a season. There are new marks on the doorframe which cannot begin to tell the stories.

Branches participated in the annual Jericho March, where students and staff pray their way through school hallways. Last night several students celebrated their decisions to walk with Jesus by being baptized... and you already know, God showed up.

On Sunday night, I was able to speak at CRF The Mine, in Cadiz Ohio. God showed up there too. After meeting with The Mine Staff on Monday we were back on the road, headed for our home. In the last month, Dawn and I figured to have slept in 10-12 different beds.

We hope to see you this spring at one of our fundraising events. We are asking God to show up and for you to experience Him as we share face to face at four locations. Just before that is Easter- the calendar holiday that marks victory in Jesus. It is that hope we share with rural youth, because of you.

If you see us, we may bear the marks of the road. Each line written on our faces tells a story of God showing up. 🙏



Introducing...

Crossroads Farm Board of Directors: Sundown Kelley

I am a homemaker in Huntsville, AL. I have two daughters ages 15 and 13 and am married to Wes Kelley, CEO of Huntsville Utilities. I graduated from Hilldale College in 1997 and returned to work at the College in 1999 where I volunteered for Crossroads Farm for three years before getting married and moving South. I've prayed for, financially supported, and watched God grow this amazing ministry for the past twenty odd years. I've always believed in Crossroads Farm's simple mission: bored and isolated kids find themselves in trouble; they need activities, connection and most importantly God.

Although my focus has been raising kids, supporting my husband, and giving back to my community, I have worked on several short-term projects specializing in program development, project management, process improvement and strategic planning for educational institutions and small businesses. I volunteer for several non-profit organizations including church and school and am currently the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee for the Huntsville Madison County Library Foundation. I am thrilled to serve on the Crossroads Farm Board. It is a true privilege to join smart, loving and dedicated people in this critical mission to impact rural youth and see God's hand move in tangible ways.

"We Got Annie"

Ok, so not the curly haired redhead from the book, musical or movie...but a red head nonetheless. Annie is a senior at Trine University who completed a 10 week internship at Crossroads Farm this winter applying her English degree to various forms of editing, student registration and daily student devotional writing. She first came to know the ministry of CRF through her Great Aunt's volunteerism before her.

"I saw God in the unprompted conversations between students at winter retreat when there was no adult leading them in that direction." 🙏





Crossroads Farm

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Loving The Rural Teenager






Prayer Closet

Yahoos:

- God provided all the scholarship funding needed for winter retreat for all three branches through you
- God has raised up an incredibly invested Leadteam (adult volunteers/Coaches and student leaders/Crew)
- Three missionary candidates in the support raising process



Take It To Jesus:

- Puzzle Pieces Fundraising Events the end of April 
- 17 new believer follow up and discipleship relationships from this first quarter
- The Lanes Purchase and Expansion Campaign 
- New (like new) 22 passenger vehicle needed for each branch 

Monthly Prayer Letter

If you would like to receive the monthly email prayer update from one or more branches, please let us know.

Donor Spotlight

Sometimes, our donors visit our branches and see the ministry first hand. Here is a quote from ministry partners, Steve and Phyllis, who are visiting all three branches this semester.

"We are still not getting over the amazing time we had last night. How can we ever say thank you to every one of the staff who does their part to minister to these kids. I am still praying for a guy I saw who didn't seem dressed as well as some others there. He looked unhappy. It really hurt. I prayed for him and still am. Then the message appeared to be perfect for him. I could hardly believe it. I pray he saw and "heard" Jesus last night. The message was for me last night. I'm still processing.

I felt Jesus everywhere last night. I mean His presence was there. I couldn't believe the people who visited with us. Every one of them was totally amazing—like a million Christmas gifts. I feel so unworthy." 🙏

For the ongoing work in the lives of rural youth, special gifts were given:

In Memory Of

Bob and Connie Hoffman
Lois Chambo
Joseph Shanor

