

Taking the Gospel to Public Schools

Beth Montgomery has a passion for sharing the love of Jesus with public elementary school children. For the last 16 years, Beth has been involved with leading Good News Clubs - a ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship- first in her neighborhood, then for the last 7 years in local elementary schools. The purpose of Good News Club is to evangelize children and reach the next generation with the life changing power of the Gospel. They meet once a week after school for an hour and a half. They play games, sing songs, learn Bible stories, hear stories of missionaries such as Billy Graham and Jim Elliott, and even memorize scripture. With everything they do, they learn to apply God's principles to their lives. The impact of Good News Clubs at the schools where they meet does not go unnoticed by its teachers and principals. Basic biblical principles that they teach at Good News Clubs are things that the schools want to teach the children as well, such as obeying your parents, loving one another, telling the truth, and respecting each other. "Once the schools get used to us," says Beth, "they welcome us." She says that at one school, the principal saw the whole atmosphere of the school change as a result of Good News Club. "The principals would get together and talk about what a difference Good News Club made, to the point where schools that didn't have one would want to have one," Beth said. "And to see these kids want to invite other kids, not just because they want their friends there, but because they know these other children need Jesus in their lives."

Beth has been involved with successfully launching and running a Good News Club at Wexford Elementary, and trained the teachers who started the Good News Club at both Marshall and Bradford Woods Elementary schools. This year Beth is seeking to re-establish a club at Wexford Elementary. "I love seeing the children respond and change when they get to know how much Jesus loves them," Beth says. "I've seen it again and again. I've seen whole families come to Christ because of the child coming to Christ." In one case, as a result of the child coming to Good News Club, his mother also came to Christ. Six years later, his mother passed away. She has an eternal home in heaven as a result of her child coming to Good News Club.

"School isn't what it used to be," says Beth, "it is tough. Kids today have many challenges that I never faced in school." She also says that part of leading a Good News Club is the privilege that she gets to pray for the children, especially when she gets to see those prayers answered. Each week during the meeting, the children share prayer requests in small groups, which gives the leaders an opportunity to get to know the children individually as well as some of the challenges they face.

Beth says that usually more than half of the kids that come to the club do attend a church, but it definitely depends on the club. It can be totally a mixed bag, with many of the kids not involved in a church at all. Even with children that do attend church and are familiar with the gospel, it is very empowering to meet together in the name of Christ where they attend school. As Christian children locate other Christians that they may not have known about before, it can strengthen their faith and give them more boldness to live for Christ at their school. The kids are also encouraged to invite their friends, giving them the opportunity to be local missionaries.

Beth currently needs more volunteers to fill all of the roles necessary to run a Good News Club at Wexford Elementary, including snacks donators, small group leaders, administrators and teachers. Most of all, however, "We need pray-ers!" Beth says. "We pray for the schools, we pray for the kids, the rooms, the classes, the children, and their families. We want to evangelize, but we don't want to stuff it down their throats. We want to be sensitive to the Holy Spirits' leading and let the Holy Spirit move."

You can read more about Good News Clubs at www.cefonline.com/ministries/goodnewsclub. If you are interested in volunteering or for more information on how to get involved, please contact Beth Montgomery at macbeth26@me.com.