

Missions in Action - Christy Cratty

Baby Steps

About 4 years ago, after quitting work and sending one of two children off to college, Christy Cratty found herself with some extra time on her hands. She wanted to do something fulfilling, but did not know where to begin, so she had an earnest conversation with God and asked Him to show her where He wanted her to become involved. Shortly after that moment, Christy attended a women's Christian gathering at which Urban Impact (UI) was speaking about their literacy support program. Urban Impact is a NCC Mission Partner which operates on the Northside providing after school programming in the arts, athletics and tutoring for kids, all in a Christian environment where the gospel message is intertwined. The literacy program is unique in that UI volunteers have been asked by local schools to come during the school day to provide reading support in the classroom. Christy heard all about how impactful the program is and distinctly remembers thinking "that would be an awesome opportunity for someone who is interested, but that's definitely not for me; I could never do that."

Following the gathering, the UI representative was chatting with Christy and discovered that Christy's daughter, Bria, was a soccer player and suggested that she might want to help at Urban Impact's summer soccer camp. That summer, Bria and some of her soccer friends began volunteering every Monday for the 1-2 hour soccer camp. Because Christy drove the girls from their hometown in Mars to the Urban Impact facilities on the Northside, she, by default (or was it by God's design...?), became the team helper - taking kids to the bathroom, helping haul soccer balls and nets to and from the field, etc. Subsequently, due to this interaction with the kids, Christy was asked to obtain her clearances for child safety.

The following summer, Bria had the opportunity to tutor kids for an hour or so before the soccer camp on Mondays at Urban Impacts summer day camp, which she did. So, Christy would sit in the room during the tutoring and would assist Bria here and there when needed.

That Fall, UI started an evening tutoring center where children would come after school for homework help and Bible study. Christy asked Bria if she would be interested in volunteering after her soccer season was over and she agreed. On the second week of tutoring center, one of the tutors did not show up and Christy was asked if she could fill-in, just for the day. Seeing that she already had her clearances, this was not a problem (God's omniscience is amazing!). Christy then filled-in every week after that and thus began her "career" in tutoring children.

The third summer, Christy took a more active role in soccer camp and had her own children to tutor at summer day camp. Once the school year started, Christy and her daughter returned to Monday evening tutoring center where they both were tutors. Through this weekly interaction with the Urban Impact staff, Christy became good friends with Rhetta, one of the Urban Impact Missionaries that helped supervise the tutoring programs. Rhetta shared her vision with Christy about starting a math support program in the schools and asked if Christy would be interested in helping her. Christy immediately obliged and tutored the same three kindergartners in math for the whole year in King Elementary on the northside of Pittsburgh, as well as continuing to tutor with her daughter on Monday nights.

Since Bria had then finished her senior year of high school and was soon leaving for college, they decided to take the summer off from Urban Impact. That lasted for about one week when Urban Impact called Christy and asked if she would be willing to just tutor one student during the summer as she really needed some extra support. Again, Christy couldn't say no to these "adorable kids" and was rewarded ten-fold with a special friendship with this student and her mother. Christy is now continuing to be part of the math support team in MLK elementary school as well as tutoring in their after-school program. "The math program is going so well that this year the school gave us our own dedicated

classroom.” Christy spent the last week cleaning and re-decorating that room to create a welcoming environment for students.

“If someone told me that day at the women’s gathering that I would spend the next four years tutoring kids through Urban Impact, I’d have thought they were crazy! But God was so gracious in answering my prayer by giving me baby steps along the way.” Christy has been blessed beyond belief by seeing the answer to her prayer in such a loving way and by the many friendships she has cultivated along the way with the Urban Impact staff, the kids, and even some of their parents, not to mention the real results of her tutoring as shown in improved test scores.

Anyone who may be inspired to start their volunteer journey with Urban Impact and would like to take a baby step today, can contact Christy at ccratty2002@gmail.com, Urban Impact directly at Laura.erb@uifpgh.org, or learn more about UI at their website <https://www.uifpgh.org/home>. There are many more kids that need to be tutored than they have volunteers, so please don’t delay if you’re feeling led! They also have programming in the arts and athletics for which they always need volunteers.

