President’s Report

Family Guidance is in the “direction changing” business

Brian Johansson

Dear Friend of Family Guidance:

Recent data from the local public elementary school in the community of Homewood illustrates the challenges many of our mentees and campers deal with each day. Only 27.4% of kindergarten through 5th grade students were proficient in reading, 32.1% were proficient in Math and 33% of all students were chronically absent from school. Many of the children Family Guidance works with live in the Homewood community. Because of these statistics, it is no wonder that the future is often bleak for these kids. A future facing poverty, unrealized potential and frustration is what this data predicts for many of the kids Family Guidance works with. Yet, we see our purpose as “giving hope and a future” to children living in some of Pittsburgh’s roughest neighborhoods. With God’s blessing and provision, Family Guidance is in the direction changing business.

To demonstrate the impact of mentoring let me briefly tell you about Clara and Tina (names have been changed). Clara and Tina have been matched for almost 7 years. Clara, having put herself through nursing school and then through law school, is an independent strong personality. Mentoring humbled her when she entered a 10 year old’s world of poverty and abuse. Clara had to learn patience and that she could not control outcomes and results in mentoring. All she could do was walk alongside this young girl’s life and be a friend in the pain and healing. They have done everything from neighborhood walks, making dinners together, going to laundry mats, to Steelers preseason games, movies, zoo, and a trip to New York City. Tina has said “I love everything about her (Clara). When I am down she makes me laugh.” And Clara says of Tina “I look forward to our time together.”

One little life at a time, Family Guidance volunteers and staff are making a difference, working to change the “direction of a life.” Statistics don’t dictate a life, God does. Peggy and I appreciate your prayers and support.

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Moving Forward in Thanksgiving

Brett Probert, Camp Director

Promise Camp 2013 is now a great memory and we’re so thankful to the Lord for all He did and continues to do as He lights up our world. As soon as we had the last camper on the bus and headed home to light it up in their neighborhood, we began praying and planning for summer 2014! We have set the goal to increase the number of campers we will serve next summer from 235 to 285. There are three significant ways we hope to accomplish this.

First, a new Leadership Development program and is kicking off this November with a retreat at Promise Camp. We realized that ending our ministry to kids when they’re 14 contributes to the risks they face and doesn’t make for a seamless transition for young people to serve on our summer staff. So we’re going to begin working with promising 13-16 year old campers in a leadership development track that will include two weeks of discipleship during the summer. This will be an intensive and intentional pouring into our youth with the purpose of seeing them grow in Christ and in their leadership potential to their neighborhoods, schools, churches, and ministries like Promise Camp. Sounds promising, doesn’t it?!

Second, we’re restructuring the way we do agebreakdowns for the specific weeks of our Promise Camp sessions. This will give our parents, kids, and ministry partners more variety and choice in the weeks they can send their children to camp. It will help to cut down on the waiting lists and saying no to kids who can’t wait to be campers.

Third, we continue to strengthen our existing strategic partnerships and are developing some exciting new ones as well. The Pittsburgh Project and Urban Impact Foundation are two of our bigger partners who are eager to entrust children from their summer camp ministries to Promise Camp for a week next year. We’re also working with ministries in the West End, Aliquippa, Beaver Falls, and other areas to serve more kids from these communities as well. We are also excited because God has opened some incredible doors to partner with great ministries in the Mon Valley and the Hill District as well!

God is so faithful and we are thankful for grace, provision, and wisdom as we move forward in ministry. We are already beginning to assemble a fantastic staff, theme, and relational programming for next summer that will honor the Lord and His children. Thank you for your support on the journey!

Notes of Thanks

Thank you so much for making this camp the best it could be. Thanks for the wonderful food, club, and the things you put on our bed for when we got there. I had a great 4 years’ experience and I’m so sad that it’s my last as a camper.

- Cherise, 2013 Promise Camper

Thank you sooo much for this opportunity! Cindy fell in love with Tanya (her counselor), and yes we received the letter. We will be sending the retreat information and payment you requested. I am hoping for Cindy as well as my other daughter Sandy to stay in contact with your great staff. They have so many God given gifts and I want them to be able to share them with others.

-Kay

(Parent of a camper attending the Leadership Development retreat in November)

PittsburghGives Update

For the fourth year the city wide Day of Giving, orchestrated by The Pittsburgh Foundation, has blown us away! Giving to Family Guidance came from all across the city, the neighborhoods north, south, east and west, other organizations and some out-of-staters who keep a bit of their heart in the Steel City. The Pittsburgh Foundation’s tagline says “Where Giving Meets Purpose,” and for Family Guidance the giving totaled $6,850! For Family Guidance, the purpose is to “give children and families a hope and a future” with opportunity to see and come to know Jesus in Mentoring, Marriage and Camping ministries. We are Family Guidance, but it is Christ who guides US. Thank you Pittsburgh Gives for partnering with us, making a difference in our city for children and families.
Giving Thanks for Amazing Blessings, A Story of Mentoring
Ashley Bailey, on the set
A s a single mom, I can only do so much,” remarked Seretha Matthews, the mother of Jamar Brown, a fifteen-year-old Family Guidance mentee. Six years ago, Jamar got his mentor, Schawn Conner, a husband and a father figure. This October, Jamar, Schawn, and his families gathered to share their story on a new film about the work of Family Guidance. Schawn and his wife, Lisa, first heard about the Mentoring Program from watching a video at Northway Church. Lisa said, “I felt that tug on my heart.” It was that tug that led her and her family to Jamar. They felt called by God to do involved! Find out how in our latest Impact Story at www.familyguidance.net.

The Conner family sees Jamar as part of their family - like a son. Jamar unwitngly taught the Conner kids a lesson or two in courtesy. Lisa laughingly explained “Jamar says, ‘yes, sir’ and ‘yes, ma’am.’ And we were like, ‘See, kids. This is how you’re supposed to address an adult!’ Jamar says, ‘If we were to tell a friend about mentoring, it’s about having people who are more and like family to you every day.’” From day one, the Conners have been a blessing to our household!” exclaims Seretha. Jamar recognized how he had been helped by Schawn and his family. With clarity and confidence, Jamar explained, “[He] teaches me what’s wrong and what’s right, keeps me on track, he’s there.” Jamar’s trust even extended beyond Schawn and to the entire Conner family. “No matter what happens, they’ll always be there.” He knew, too the reality of his surroundings. “Even when we’re not seeing Jamar enough. “We started thinking about mentoring, it’s about having people in your life who are there for you. So what can we expect for the future? Jamar has some big dreams. When he grows up, he wants to play football, basketball, and baseball. And he is an entrepreneur; he wants to be self-employed as a manager of his own auto garage! Always though, it is about relationships. A son’s desire for a father figure, a godly single mom’s desire to provide one, a godly and willing mentor and family signing on for the long-haul, and Family Guidance connecting kids and families together so that the Lord can do what He does: bless, encourage and nurture us in His ways.

It is an honor to serve with these special people and with you who support our efforts to bring hope and a future to children and families.

Do you feel led to be a mentor? If you are a committed Christian at least 15 years of age who can spend 3-4 hours each week with an at-risk child for at least a one year minimum commitment, please contact Family Guidance at 412-741-8550.

I remember that the week Debbie came I had more fun in the pool then I think I had any other week, and that was all because of the fulfillment and joy that I saw from Debbie during that week. Debbie was a competitor that did not know how to swim. So as I took to the pool, I ended up on the shallow end where she was. Early in the week Debbie was asking for the counselors’ help learning to swim. The lifeguards were patrolling the area so I tried to help Debbie as best I could. I was a little reluctant at first, because to be completely honest, I wanted to swim and enjoy pool time, rather than teach. But as I began to help Debbie, my heart felt it. I would watch as her technique became a little bit stronger and she went a little bit further each time, just trying to make it to the finish line, which in this case was me. And as she made it there, she would ask “Did I do good, Mr. Roland?” And as I answered her an excited “yes!” she would smile brightly, lift up and get ready to try to go a little further the next time. Something that seemed so small to me at first, and something that I didn’t really want to do ended up bringing so much joy and inspiration to Debbie and maybe even more joy and inspiration to me. I remember Debbie saying something that just melted me inside and still does every time I think about it. “I hope I will remember everything I’ve learned by the time my mom gets here because I can’t wait to show her how much I learned and all the things I’ve learned.” And her excitement and joy were so contagious, wrapping me up and taking me along for the ride.
News and Needs

Family Guidance turns 50!
Don’t miss the 50-Year Legacy Gala on April 4, 2014 at the Fairmont. Broadway star Ivan Rutherford - the original Jean Valjean - and Co. will perform a selection of hits from Les Miserables and more.

A Note to Our Faithful Dinner Auction Attendees
For 20 years we’ve loved seeing you at our yearly event! Your support means the world to us and has enabled us to serve. And so, with an eye toward our 50th anniversary, we’ve moved our event to April 4, 2014 to celebrate five decades of bringing hope and a future to Pittsburgh’s at-risk kids and families. We appreciate your contributions, so visit www.familyguidance.net in November for new and exciting ways to give.

Family Guidance has just joined “SNAPSEA.”
The Sewickley Non-Profit Consortium AKA “SNAPSEA” Collaborates, Connects and Celebrates! All members of SNAPSEA benefit from local and city wide enrichment programs and we do it alongside organizations such as: Sewickley Library, Union Aid, Pittsburgh Fellows, and World Vision to name a few! Partnerships are a mainstay for non-profits, and Family Guidance President and CEO Brian Johansson says it this way, “Collaboration is in my blood! Those of us in the non-profit world who do well will find ourselves collaborating because it is key to everyone’s success.

Vehicles Needed
- One late model 15-Passenger Van
- One late model Pickup Truck with 4-Wheel Drive and Plow

Frontlines
A biannual newsletter of Family Guidance

Editor: Susan LeCornu
Design: Colleen Pusateri
Printing: Pittsburgh Mailing
Photography: Ingram Portrait Design, Shane Austin, Glenn Richards

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TWOgether Pittsburgh

A Very Big Deal
Ken MacLeod

On an October weekend, Pastor Dave Moore of Faith Community church did something that sounds pretty normal. He presided over a wedding and delivered a homily on 1 Corinthians 13.

No big deal, right?

For those of us at TWOgether Pittsburgh, it is a big deal.

You see, the couple in question is not a pair of church kids who grew up at Faith Community and are getting married at their home church. They are not a couple of young adults who have known Pastor Dave for years and want him to have a prominent part in their special day. Nor are they a couple of marginal Christians being pressured by their parents to have a “church wedding.”

The only connection these two have to Pastor Dave is the TWOgether Pittsburgh marriage preparation class that they took from him.

They had been planning a wedding for quite a while with no intention of having a pastor there. They simply don’t go to church and they didn’t really know that many Christians, let alone any pastors. However, after taking the prep class, they have built a great connection with Pastor Dave and he has become an important part of how they think about their upcoming marriage.

Chances are also very good that in the years to come, they will always know that there is a Pastor who has invested in their marriage who is willing to be there for them again. A Pastor who will be there urging them into the arms of a loving God who died to save them.

So on an October afternoon, Pastor Dave got to stand up in front of a group of people, many of whom may not yet have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and deliver a message of hope and love.

For those of us at TWOgether Pittsburgh, that’s kind of a big deal.

For more information or to register for an upcoming program, call us at 1-888-WED-4EVR or visit us on the web at www.TWOgetherPGH.org

A Feather in Our Cap
Susan LeCornu

Behind the scenes in every organization are countless folks of great talent supporting the ministry in the trenches. Most recently, the development “trench” added a new talent and she is truly a feather in our cap!

Welcome Beth Feather, a Pirates fan, a Steelers fan, a tireless advocate for veterans and a tremendous support to development as we plan and execute our fundraising strategies year-round. Beth has her undergraduate degree from Asbury College, and her graduate degree from Slippery Rock. A life-long resident of Moon Township, an active member at St. Stephen’s Church, she has worked at Goodwill Industries, for the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and other Pittsburgh non-profits.

Beth would love to hear from you regarding our upcoming fundraising events, and answer any questions you may have about partnering with Family Guidance! Give her a call at 412-741-8550 x 104 and say Hello!
Donate Online
Now easier than ever at our new website
www.FamilyGuidance.net

Donate at Work
Designate your gift to Family Guidance:
United Way - Contributors Choice #166
State Employees - SECA #461120
Federal Employees - CFC #45546

Volunteer
The “hands-on” way to bring hope and a future
to our kids and families!
For more information on various volunteer opportunities, contact:
Susan LeCornu at 412-741-8550 ext. 103
or slecornu@familyguidance.net