"If You Had a Magic Wand and Could Change One Thing, What Would It Be?"

by Kent Scroggs

This was one of three questions asked of participants at the “Neighborhood Meeting” hosted by ROP on May 25th. The meeting was the first of what we hope will become regular meetings with people from our community focused on engaging and uniting them in the process of making our community a better place to live. The other two questions we asked were “What is hard or challenging about living in this community?” and “What do you like most about living in this neighborhood?”

From the answers to these questions, we collectively looked for common themes. The top five identified by the group were (1) Unity (sub-themes of diversity, language barriers and churches), (2) Pride (sub-themes of ownership, attitude and trash), (3) Affordable housing, (4) Crime (sub-themes of drugs, prostitution and gangs) and (5) Youth (sub-themes of parks and churches).

This was as far as we got at this meeting, but from the increasing level of noise in the room, I could tell that the participants were engaged and excited about the process we had just begun. At the close of the meeting, our leader and the leader of our Flourish East Colfax collaboration, Michael Philip, asked everyone to come back in two weeks and bring at least one neighbor. At this meeting, we will focus on taking an inventory of the skills and abilities of our assembled community members. From there, Michael says we will probably separate into “voice groups” that will focus on just one theme and consider how the group might use the skills and abilities of the people in that group (their “assets”) to address their issue.

And so the ABCD process “begins”. But really it began last Fall when leaders of six local churches and Christian non-profits (which we are now calling Flourish East Colfax) gathered to talk about the concept of “Asset based Community Development” (ABCD). Since then we have had several ABCD-related trainings, but most of what we have done for the last 3+ months is pray – pray as individuals and in groups, pray while walking or driving in our communities or in gatherings in various locations and meetings. While we were eager to get started, the priority of prayer has been critically important in terms of preparing the soil of our community and preparing our own hearts for what God wants to do through the ABCD process.

Stay tuned. I look forward to sharing the adventure with you.

Story-telling - Great for Engaging Kids - Great for Sharing God’s Word

by Matt Smith

Over the past three years, ROP’s youth (middle and high school) ministry has gone through a few changes. Most significantly, we added some awesome new volunteers, and this Spring, we began a weekly outreach at Montview park, just a couple blocks north of ROP.

At the park, we play soccer and teach Bible stories, using what is called “orality based methods”. Rick Randall, one of our new high impact volunteers, has a passion for communicating God’s word through Bible stories. Rick has been trained in orality teaching methods by Jerry Wiles who teaches this method internationally. (See a great article about this in the April 2017 issue of Christianity today.) We simply interact with youth through soccer and other games in order to build relationships and communicate God’s word. This method of teaching is an extremely effective way to communicate God’s word relevantly to anybody willing to engage in the story. We tell a story, ask questions, and ask the listener to recall and sometimes retell the story. By doing this, the listener effectively learns the story with the ability of telling it to others. Very cool!
Montview park is a magnet for the youth in our neighborhood, giving us the opportunity to meet a large number of kids and parents. Our plan is to continue to do outreach at the park throughout the summer which will allow us to build relationships with a core group of kids for ROP’s youth ministry going into the Fall. It is my prayer that we will be able to disciple more youth as a result of our outreach this summer.

In Matthew 9:37 Christ claimed that “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” This is still true today. With this in mind, our hope and prayer is also to mobilize more adult volunteers who feel called to minister to the youth in our community as we continue to build God’s kingdom with our youth. It is truly amazing to see how many are open to hearing God’s word and desiring to know our heavenly Father!

I thank God for Rick’s desire to share God’s word through story-telling and have become a strong advocate for the orality teaching method taught by Jerry Wiles. If you are interested in learning a simple and effective way to share God’s word with others, ROP will be co-hosting a training on September 9th at Agape Missionary Church. Agape’s Pastor, Norm Hurd, is a member of ROP’s board and shares the same passion for sharing God’s word effectively with others. Feel free to email me at matt@restorationoutreachprograms.org if you are interested in this training or becoming a high impact ROP volunteer.

“I Always Wanted to be a Missionary”

I wanted to be a “missionary” from the time I was a child. Instead, I got married and raised four children over 38 years. When retirement came, my husband and I determined we would not be cruisers, golfers or couch potatoes. We looked for an adventure together where we could be used to expand the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We found what we were looking for when we discovered ROP.

We began by serving in ROP’s Work Readiness program where we worked mostly with Caucasians, African Americans and Hispanics. Our students worked hard to improve their lot in life by getting a GED degree and, subsequently, getting a better job. It was very rewarding to help these people learn, set goals and work toward their achievement. Several of them reached those goals and now have their graduation picture on the “Wall of Fame” in the GED room.

Over time, the neighborhood kept changing and soon there were hundreds of Burmese and Nepalese people, mostly women, coming to ROP to learn English. So, I started teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). Now, I could really be a “missionary” because I was able to use the Bible as I taught English to people from other countries. I fell in love with the people. I visited and taught and sought to love like Jesus. I was fulfilled.

Later, the need arose for a director of ROP’s ESL program. I accepted this position and, now, I was part of ROP’s leadership team of missionaries. Together we learned about loving God and loving others as we prayed and studied about Jesus and how best to serve the people we were helping. I found out that “missionaries” are very real, ordinary and yet extraordinary people. It is one thing to think, “this is how it is in a missionary’s life”, but another to experience it in person. ROP’s staff had problems, heartaches, joys, and victories, just like everyone else. But the main thing I observed was the staff’s total heart commitment to their ministry and the people they served.

Over the 7 plus years I have served at ROP, I have observed and seen a lot of changes. God is on the move to bring the neighborhood to Himself. Improvements included remodeling the facility, having “open hours” with a receptionist, having childcare, hiring people from the community, beginning a prayer group of local area pastors, and most recently, making the decision to more pro-actively go out into the community rather than just waiting for people to come into ROP for services.

In closing, I simply would encourage anyone who has wanted to be a “missionary” to come volunteer at ROP. You will be the one most blessed if you do.

**Pedal 4A Purpose 2017 - September 23rd - New Location - New Run/Walk**

Get more information and/or Register at www.Pedal4aPurpose.com - Early Registration ends June 30th