

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSIONS

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JULY 2024

We Ran Out

Jeff Gilman, Executive Director

Last year was a little different.

At City Kids, we've had the Gospel Illusionist, the Amazing Caine, for years now. Last year, instead of breaking into small groups to discuss starting a personal relationship with Jesus, the entire group stayed together. Caine ended his message by giving the kids an opportunity to come forward, pray and get a ticket. They brought the ticket to me so that I could give them a certificate declaring they had made a decision for Christ.

Even though entire families were sitting together, Caine focused his invitation on the children. But at that one moment, as kids began standing and walking forward, one little boy stood up, turned and looked at his

father, saying, "Dad, don't you want to go to Heaven, too?"

Both that little boy and his father made decisions to follow Christ that day! Each of them got their own certificate to take home with them.

Last year was the first year we gave out certificates. It's an idea that came from Nikigiovonie, our Event Coordinator. Her daughter had gotten a similar certificate when she first decided to follow Christ and she still has it. We thought it was a fantastic idea so we printed up 180 certificates thinking that would be more than enough.

We ran out.

That's how many people accepted the Gospel invitation! We got addresses for everyone who didn't get one that day and mailed them out as soon as we could.

Don't worry. This year, we'll be printing up a lot more of those certificates, and I'm praying we run out again.

"...one little boy stood up, turned and looked at his father, saying, "Dad, don't you want to go to Heaven, too?"



It's All About Planting Seeds

Fernando, pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Misión and the Mission's Hispanic Partner Relations Coordinator, has been building relationships with families through City Kids almost since it first started – 20 years ago!



Working both on staff at the Mission and as Pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Misión, Fernando and his wife, Lina, see a lot of heartbreaking need in our community.

"Most of our people who come to our church are poor and needy families," Fernando says. "They need backpacks very bad."

So Fernando does the best thing he can think of. He invites them to City Kids and tells them to invite their friends with children, too. He knows that in addition to the supplies they need, the seed of salvation will be planted.

And in their 20 years of being part of City Kids, Fernando and Lina have seen a lot of fruit – and they still are.

Just the other day, Yadira, a mother who was saved at

City Kids, called Lina in tears. Her son had joined the Marines, and she hadn't gotten to see him for three months. But he was coming to see her, and his one request was that she take him to Fernando's church, where she had taken them when she had first become a follower of Christ.

"At City Kids, we plant the seed, share the gospel and bless our generation." – Fernando

He hadn't been there since he was eight!

"City Kids will be in children's memories. . . when the years pass, they'll remember, 'I received God's love through these wonderful people that took their time to buy backpacks and to fill them with beautiful things,'" Lina says. "Even if families decide not to go to church, those children still had that seed planted."

Each \$27.35 you give provides one backpack full of age-specific school supplies for one student.

City Kids is About Way More than Backpacks



At City Kids, we're able to share God's love, provide school supplies, have a lot of fun and build relationships in unique, lasting ways!

This year celebrates 20 years of City Kids!

What started as a small event has grown to include 50 partner churches, 200+ volunteers, hundreds of families, a feast of food and fun and so much more.

So many families can't afford to go to fairs or festivals, so we show God's generosity by making it free to everyone who attends. That's only possible because of faithful partners like you!

Every year, needy kids and families are blessed in incredible ways – and so are all those who participate. This year we're expecting at least 1,100 kids and their families!

City Kids North County is July 27th.
City Kids Santa Rosa is August 3rd.

The Festivals Include:

- Food
- Games and crafts
- Backpacks with age-specific school supplies
- Haircuts
- Bible giveaway
- Gospel presentation
- Family photos
- Book giveaway
- And more



Celebrating Alice's Legacy

City Kids wouldn't be what it is today if Alice Lowe, who was our Director of Outreach and Volunteers, hadn't helped it get on a solid foundation from the start.

"When it started, we were doing it in the parking lot of the Santa Rosa Avenue Thrift Store," Alice says. "It was the back-to-school giveaway. And at that time, kids could actually go in the store to get an outfit and stuff."

At that first event there were a handful of kids. This year, with events at two locations, we expect 1,100 kids plus their families! Alice has not only watched it grow, but helped to make it happen by getting as many churches involved as possible.

"In the beginning, when it was so small, I mean it really was like family. And then when it became 'City Kids,' then it was just this huge family, and everybody had their piece of the pie. We're united in wanting to be there for the community and serve the community," Alice says.

"There's been a huge need, and this is such a great way to impact a child's life by giving them things that they need to have a successful school experience. They need that in the beginning, so they don't get behind before they even get started."

God willing, City Kids will continue to bless thousands of kids and families for at least another 20 years.

As you pray for this year's event, please also pray for Alice as she settles into retirement, trusting God will use her in all sorts of new ways.

After 24 years on staff at the Mission, Alice recently retired. We miss her already, but are so grateful for her faithful years of service and know that her legacy will live on, especially with City Kids.



Find Your Place



City Kids isn't just a blessing to needy families, it's a blessing to everyone who volunteers, too!

"With City Kids, we mobilize our community. We mobilize the leaders and church. We mobilize people who probably, they don't even know they have those kind of gifts," Fernando, RGM's Hispanic Partner Relations Coordinator and Pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Misión, says.

In addition to spaces for church groups to host booths, we have hundreds of opportunities for individuals.

"I could start crying thinking about the volunteers. Without them, City Kids wouldn't be possible," Alice, City Kids' first volunteer coordinator says.

Current Volunteer Opportunities:

- Greeting
- Guest check-in
- Set-up and tear-down
- First aid
- Backpack distribution
- . . . and more



Want to serve in a way you don't see? Let us know! And bring a friend, because as Alice says, "Everything's better with a friend."

**City Kids North County is July 27th.
City Kids Santa Rosa is August 3rd.**

Sign up now or get help finding your place by contacting Tina Karns tkarns@rgm.org 707.578.1830 x 314 OR rgm.org/CityKids2024

Backpack Tags

Please sign and return both of your Backpack Tags when you send your gift to provide backpacks and supplies.

We want to make sure that every backpack handed out has a tag on it. Please send yours by July 26th. We're expecting at least 1,100 kids!



Give a Backpack!

Needy kids are used to hearing no.

Even "free" events have a price tag – if you want something to eat, it's extra. Want to jump in that bounce house? You'll have to pay. These parents just constantly have to tell their kids no because they can't afford it, and not only does it break their kids' hearts, it breaks the parents' hearts, too.

That's why, with your support, we make everything at City Kids free to the people who attend. It's meant to be fun. It's meant to be a celebration of God's generosity. It's meant to be a time when kids get to just be kids. And that can truly change everything.

It may start with a backpack, but it's about so much more.

It's about building relationships, sharing God's love and giving kids hope and encouragement to be the people that they were created to be.

They might not get it anywhere else, but they will get it at City Kids. And they'll get to take a backpack home to remind them of the experience – and God's love – for years to come!

Will you help make it possible by sending a gift?



To help in time, please respond by July 26th. Remember to return your signed Backpack Tags when you send your gift.

Give online at: rgm.org/backpack



Each \$27.35 you give provides one backpack full of supplies!

Change Lives in the Future, too!



Your gift today can change the future for a child in need, and when you name Redwood Gospel Missions in your will or estate plan, you'll change even more lives in the future! Over the years, a number of faithful friends have left gifts to the Mission, and they are continuing to have an impact today.



For more information on legacy giving, contact Jeff Gilman at 707.578.1830.



REAL CHANGE

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