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Andrews Hosts 20th Annual Acrofest

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AUSTIN HO

Acrofest, hosted at Andrews University, Nov. 10–12, 2011, brought nearly 1,000 gymnasts to the campus for spiritual renewal, enrichment and collaboration.

Andrews hosts 20th annual Acrofest

The 20th annual Acrofest was hosted at Andrews University, Nov. 10–12, 2011. This annual event brings Seventh-day Adventist gymnasts together from institutions across the country and around the world for spiritual renewal and a chance to collaborate with other gymnasts.

Nearly 1,000 gymnasts and their coaches attended this year's Acrofest. Teams came from as far away as Antilean Adventist University in Puerto Rico and Canadian University College in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. The 26 participating teams represented academy teams, some private gymnastic programs and seven Seventh-day Adventist college teams.

Israel Falcon is the head coach of the Akro-Lites, a team from Fajardo, Puerto Rico. Akro-Lites is an example of a program that isn't affiliated with any particular institution, but operates as a ministry helping kids with a range of challenges from attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder to obesity. "We offer a motivational program where we teach moral and Christian values, and give them an organized structure in their lives," he says. "Events like this show them what knowing Christ can do for them and how their goals can be achieved if they work hard."

Gymnastics head coach Christian Lighthall says, "The theme this year was, 'He Could Have Said No, But He Said Yes.' It emphasized the ultimate sacrifice Christ made for mankind." Daily worship sessions and special guest speaker, Matthew Gamble, set the tone for a weekend focused on spiritual renewal. Meanwhile, the many workshop stations and opportunities to collaborate with gymnasts from other institutions offered participants a chance to hone their technical skills.

Gymnasts attended workshops and clinics, such as "Pyramids" and "Human Video" in Johnson Gym, Beaty Gym and the Andrews Academy Gym. Human video is a new witnessing tool, according to Lighthall, that uses tumbling moves and formations to depict

a biblical theme or story. "For example, we've portrayed Moses and the parting of the Red Sea. A group of gymnasts on either side of 'Moses' waving their arms back and forth to create the imagery of waves being held back by invisible hands. We've also reenacted the ministry, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ — all with tumbling moves and formations, and no words." Each team created their own human video project, and all the pieces were incorporated into the Friday night worship.

Acrofest culminated in a live, sold-out finale in Johnson Gym featuring performances by 24 of the participating teams. "Our goal is to maintain a spiritual focus in sport but also to become better athletes," says Lighthall. "This was a way to do both."

The first Acrofest was held in 1991 at Andrews University. Under the leadership of then coach, Robert Kalua, that first Acrofest drew 600 gymnasts and their coaches. By creating a non-competitive atmosphere, Kalua helped establish opportunities for quality instruction and aimed for education and team development within the Seventh-day Adventist educational system. Each year, a different Seventh-day Adventist institution hosts Acrofest. This year marks the fourth time it was hosted at Andrews University.

Keri Suarez, media relations specialist, Office of Integrated Marketing & Communication



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The Andrews Gymnastics demonstrated a three-high pyramid during one of the Acrofest workshops.