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## Andrews Academy Offers Spiritual Journey

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Celebrating their birthdays in a new way this year, four friends collected donations for the local pet shelter. From left: Hunter Baldwin, Emma VanderWaal, Josie Suarez and Kassie Metzger

## Students request pet shelter donations for birthday

Michigan—Four third-grade students at Village Adventist Elementary School, in Berrien Springs, Mich., decided to celebrate their birthday in a new way this year. They still played party games, ate cake and ice cream, and enjoyed cheering each other on to break the *piñata*; but instead of getting presents, they collected donations for a local pet shelter.

Emma VanderWaal and Kassie Metzger, who turned ten, along with Hunter Baldwin and Josie Suarez, who turned nine, had about 35 of their friends join the birthday celebration in March held in the Village School gym. As each guest arrived, they brought with them dog and cat food, pet toys, kitty litter and even some cleaning supplies—all for the Berrien County Animal Shelter.

Although the idea originated with the children's parents, once the kids had a chance to think about it they became very excited about the idea and

started telling all their friends. The excitement continued to grow because each student at Village School always looks forward to a few traditional fourth-grade year projects that also support a local pet shelter.

“One of my friends couldn't make it to the party, but wanted to give some of his extra cans of dog food to the shelter,” says Josie. “So we kept getting donations even after the party was over.”

“In our family, we love to make birthdays a big deal but with big birthday parties comes lots of guests who each bring a gift. Although always appreciated, my child doesn't need all those gifts,” says Keri Suarez. “And at nine years old, I think it's a great time to start getting them involved in thinking about what others need instead of what they want.”

The donations, which filled up the back of a minivan, were delivered to a very appreciative staff at the Berrien County Animal Shelter.

Keri Suarez, leader, Home and School Association, Village Adventist Elementary School, as shared with Diane Thurber, assistant communication director, Lake Union Conference

## Andrews Academy offers spiritual journey

Michigan—Andrews Academy, like other schools in the Lake Union, is blessed to have parents, students and teachers praying for the spiritual journey of the school. Many church members often see school programs, drive by their church school or hear about weeks of prayer, but not many people are able to see the spiritual journey happening behind the walls of an Adventist school. I invite you to take a peek behind the walls of Andrews Academy to see the spiritual journey of a school year.

At Andrews Academy, numerous parents developed prayer groups that



Andrews Academy offers a mission trip every other year. Pictured is the entire group of students, parents and volunteers who participated in the mission trip to La Barra, Mexico.

regularly meet to pray for the teachers and students of the school. For many years, one of the parent groups met once a week in the conference room to pray for the students. They pray for all students, and specifically pray for a number of students and teachers by name. They pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This current school year the senior class parents set up a Prayer for Seniors Partnership where parents pray by name for five different seniors each week. They pray that the Holy Spirit will convict the seniors' hearts to choose God and be baptized before they graduate and move on to new endeavors. Or if they are already baptized, they pray the seniors will continue to keep God number one in their lives and also pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The teachers also actively pray for the students, not only during morning devotions, and at the beginning of many class periods, but also throughout the day. As a group, the teachers set aside some time during each faculty meeting to pray for individual students and groups of students. As teachers interact with the students, opportune times develop when teachers can pray with individual students in a meaningful way. It may be during one of the times when a teacher is praising a student for an accomplishment or in the midst of resolving a discipline issue that may have just occurred.

The students are also very involved in praying for the spiritual journey of their peers, and this past year Andrews Academy was blessed by the spiritual leadership of so many students. Four years ago, Andrews Academy set aside a "sacred space" called the "Prayer Room." The Prayer Room has softer lights and colors, and inspirational décor. There are comfortable chairs, Bibles and a journal in which students can write prayer requests. Students use the Prayer Room before or after school, and sometimes during their lunch break. In fact, most mornings a group of students meet to pray and read the Bible. Sometimes, when a



*The Andrews Academy school family gathers in the school's courtyard to capture a memory at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year.*

student faces an extremely trying circumstance, he or she slips into the Prayer Room for a few moments to lift the problem to God. Some faculty and staff also use the Prayer Room as a place where they can pray for each other or for a particular student need. It is a quiet place dedicated to God for students who want to step out of the daily routine and refocus their life through a few moments with God.

Each of the student organizations at Andrews Academy has a student pastor as one of the officers. The student pastors of the various organizations regularly meet throughout the year to plan spiritual programs at Andrews Academy. For example, class pastors lead in worship and prayer with their peers during class vespers, often held at the home of one of the students of the class. The class vespers usually includes a meal together; and sometimes, prior to sundown, there is an activity to enjoy together such as a hayride, snowmobile rides, swimming at the lake or skating. Social activities like these build bonds that promote camaraderie and deeper friendships. This promotes more openness so that

during the vespers it is more natural for students, teachers and parents to share their spiritual journey together and encourage each other to keep Jesus first in their lives.

Three years ago, Carrie Chao, Andrews Academy chemistry teacher, began inviting international Chinese students to her home on Friday evenings. Chao provided supper, an opportunity to socialize and a vespers program. Most of the international students from China attending Andrews Academy know nothing about Christianity. Their time at Andrews Academy is not only an introduction to American culture and education but an introduction to Jesus, too. They are introduced to Jesus not only during the school's morning devotions and Bible classes but in each of the classes they attend since teachers integrate faith with learning. Chao commented that when the vespers started a few years ago it was mostly a social gathering for these students that are far from home. Each year since then, there has been an increased interest in the spiritual topics. This past year guardians often had to wait to pick up their students

because the discussion of the evening went a lot longer than planned.

There are so many opportunities for students to learn about Jesus and share their faith. This past school year Andrews Academy students went to a village in La Barra, Mexico, during their Christmas break, where they built a church and conducted Vacation Bible School for the children there. Everyone worked hard building the church and sharing their faith. All returned blessed by the experiences and the miracles that occurred.

There are many other small trips that Andrews Academy offers where prayers and blessings occur. Winter Bible Camp and Leadership Retreat, held at Camp Au Sable, are awesome weekends. Also, the Andrews Academy Student Association camp-out held on the shores of Lake Michigan provides a weekend of fellowship and fun together. It is a spiritual weekend that begins the school year, and many of the students participate in it. This past school year, Yejin Kim was baptized during camp-out.

Students' lives continue to change as a result of Adventist education at Andrews Academy. Numerous stories could be told, but this one is interesting. Recently, a parent was thinking about moving to Michigan so her daughter could attend Andrews Academy. She toured the school and gathered information about the academy. As she was leaving the school after the tour, the parent talked with a number of students to ask their opinion about the spiritual atmosphere of the school. One of the students replied, "When I came to Andrews Academy, I was an atheist. Now, as you can see, I'm reading my Bible."

As already mentioned, many of the international students arrive knowing nothing about Christianity. This past spring, Mikey Guan, a student from China, was baptized during a Sabbath afternoon Andrews Academy baptism held at Pioneer Memorial Church. Besides the various baptismal services Andrews Academy holds, numerous other Academy students were baptized in their home churches.

There is so much wonderful working of God's Spirit at Andrews Academy, and many learn to love Jesus more or even meet Him for the first time. This is in part made possible by your prayers and participation at our school. Please continue to pray for Andrews Academy and all students of the Lake Union schools, that each would choose God and decide to be baptized and remain close to Him.

Steven Atkins, science teacher, Andrews Academy



Yejin Kim, then a sophomore, was baptized in Lake Michigan by her father, Paul Soontae Kim, during the Student Association camp-out in Sept. 2010.

## [ LOCAL CHURCH NEWS ]

### Girls with shared passion raise funds for ADRA

Michigan—While their classmates were at summer camp, attending a Vacation Bible School, or just enjoying being home all day during the summer, sisters Ashley and Caitlin Jankiewicz, of the Pioneer Memorial Church, and Julianna Bojko, of the Chicago Polish Church, spent their time focused on raising funds for a cause they all shared a passion for: ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency).

They started as a club of three Polish girls. They each wore Polish shirts and hats as uniforms, and selected a theme song with the line, "We like to help other people." This serves as a sort of motto for sisters Ashley and Caitlin,



From left: This summer Julianna Bojko, Ashley Jankiewicz and Caitlin Jankiewicz sold cookies and lemonade to raise funds to benefit others in need. They used the money raised to select projects from ADRA's Really Useful Gift Catalog.

and Julianna, a friend who was visiting them from out of town.

One week, during July, they were searching for something to pour their energy into. They started by giving out free cold water on a hot day to those

who passed by their home, located in a bustling neighborhood adjacent to Andrews University in Berrien Springs. After getting such a positive response, it occurred to the girls that maybe if they offered cold water for free and charged 25¢ for cookies and lemonade they might be able to raise funds to do something to help other people.

The three girls decided to raise money to buy a gift from ADRA's Really Useful Gift Catalog (see <http://giftcatalog.adra.org>), which allows people to select gifts of humanitarian aid in varying dollar amounts. The project they chose was to empower Musahar youth—members of a lower caste in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, in India—with \$125.

Ashley, Caitlin and Julianna soon realized the market for free water and 25¢ cookies and lemonade in their neighborhood wasn't large enough to help them achieve their fund-raising goal. So, they obtained permission