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# Let the Little Children Come

Ashleigh Jardine  
*Andrews University*

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## Let the Little Children Come

BY ASHLEIGH JARDINE

Isabelle Leclerc, a speech pathology major at Andrews University, says, “I enjoy going to Outreach because if I don’t, I feel like I’m not doing anything for God. Helping kids makes you feel useful to people who really need you.” Isabelle is one of the many students from Andrews University who enjoys spending Sabbath afternoons spreading the message of Jesus and His love for us to non-Christian children through outreach opportunities.

Kid Zone, the newest outreach program offered by Andrews University Campus Ministries, takes place every Sabbath afternoon at the Harbor of Hope Church in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Started by Walter Rogers, Center for Youth Evangelism children’s ministries director, Kid Zone offers college students and volunteers the chance to spend quality time with children in the community.

Kid Zone invites children from throughout the area to learn biblical truths, specifically targeting four- to 12-year-olds. The ministry begins Friday afternoons when Walter and his “crew” visit families at their homes. “We try to reach every single kid each week,” he says. “Visiting the families is the hidden part of our ministry. It is the backbone in building relationships.” The chatting and prayer guides families to Christ, as well as the newly reinvented, family-friendly church services that use visual sermons, stories, pictures and songs to spark interest. While Kid Zone is focused on the children, it’s really a way to minister to the entire family.

When the kids arrive at the Harbor of Hope Church Sabbath afternoon, a 15-minute song service helps get the wiggles out, and is followed by wholesome games encouraging noise and excitement. The goal is to teach one biblical lesson in seven different ways. Various approaches are used, including object lessons, skits, optical illusions, “magic” tricks, Bible trivia, memory verses and games. The resulting



Walter Rogers and his Kid Zone team use a variety of tactics to keep the children entertained and engaged.

cheering and laughter enforces a tactic Walter calls “controlled chaos.” After the activities are complete, kids are hustled to quickly find a seat—girls on one side and boys on the other.

“Those games were really fun,” encourage the leaders, “but they won’t change your life. Now is the time to listen. This is the Bible. It can change your life.”

Five-cent candies, balloons and even ice cream are used as incentives to encourage the kids to focus on the lesson while taking in God’s Word. The object lessons vary from week to week, with fun and applicable topics such as “Love Is Not a Feeling” and “The Good Samaritan.”

Every Sabbath, 50 to 60 kids are brought from non-Christian homes into the arms of Christ. Other interactive, relationship-based outreach programs from Andrews University include Buddies and R.O.C.K. (Reaching Out Connecting Kids); both provide ways for student volunteers to connect with children by spending time together singing, doing crafts or simply playing games. Other outreach opportunities include a program to connect with Hispanics and bilingual children, and a youth ministry program for kids older than age 12. With missions like these making a huge impact, what’s stopping you from reaching for kids outside the zone?

Ashleigh Jardine is a freshman studying at Andrews University.