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### Promising Youth

Ron Whitehead

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# Promising Youth

You may know Pathfinders is a worldwide youth group for ages 10-15 sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All youth, regardless of religious persuasion, are encouraged to join this Christian organization where they will develop their character as they grow their mental, physical, social, and spiritual walk with God.



▲ RON WHITEHEAD

Local Pathfinder clubs teach outdoor skills, leadership skills, and Bible knowledge. Activities include community and civic service projects, camping, high adventure activities and trips around their community and the world.

There are over two million Pathfinders around the world, with over 75,000 clubs in 180 countries. Within the Lake Union, there are approximately 8,000 Pathfinders in 265 clubs.

This August 5-11, 2024, 60,000 Pathfinders from over 100 countries will be attending the Believe the Promise International Camporee in Gillette, Wyoming. The Lake Union will bring almost 5,000 Pathfinders from 165 clubs. This quinquennial camporee was hosted within the Lake Union for 20 years, in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Now, our Lake Union Pathfinders will travel outside of our territory to meet new Pathfinder friends, experience new activities, learn new skills, see new sights, and best of all, worship with tens of thousands of youths their age from all over the world.

Why is Pathfinders ministry so strong, and growing around the world? I personally believe God has given His special blessing over this ministry to the youth. I believe that children and youth are the most valuable “asset” that we “own” as a faith community. Some would say the most valuable asset is our homes, cars, or bank accounts. Some

would say it is our degrees, jobs, or the committees we sit on and the positions we hold. But I say it is our children, youth and young adults, which makes all other assets pale in comparison.

Some of the most interesting conversations I have ever had were on a plane. I remember a plane ride that allowed me to move to first class for free. On this trip I found myself sitting next to a fellow where we connected right away. I found out that he was a denominational leader in charge of the world-wide mission program for their youth. I told him that I also work with youth within my faith community, and we established trust with each other quickly. I asked him why his denomination invested so much personal and financial resources in their children, youth, and young adults. He quickly replied with passion in his voice, “If we do not invest in our most valuable asset, our youth, we are just one generation away from not existing.”

Wow, what a thought. He is right; if we as a local church do not invest in the lives of this generation right now, we will not have a local church in the future.

Back to Pathfinders. Here is the good news: Every time I see an active club ministry program, I see an active church.

Our children, youth, and young adults are the lifeblood of our local church as we seek to share the





gospel with our communities. Our Pathfinder clubs and those who lead these youth groups are amazing. These leaders take their time, treasure, physical energy and vacations to mentor this generation, so they know just how much God loves them.

The best years for club ministry are in front of us. We have not fully explored all the possibilities of planting new community clubs. We have not fully explored all the possibilities of using this

generation to share the gospel in new and fresh ways in this post-COVID world.

Praise God, He gave us club ministry back in the 1950s. Now, let us pray that we can, with the Holy Spirit, take club ministry to the next level for God's glory! ■

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**Ron Whitehead** is the Lake Union director of youth, young adults and children's ministries.