

The Buddy System

Being involved in the Benton Harbor AU out-REACH Program was by far the most fulfilling experience I had at Andrews University. It really made me feel as though I had a purpose at AU, bringing out character traits in me I thought I never had.

It all began my final year at school. I made a resolution that I would start going to AU out-REACH, and volunteered to lead the ROCK Ministry for the year. At first, this decision appeared to be one of the craziest I have ever made. I realized that participating in the program meant I had to be there every week, so I was no longer at liberty to sleep on Sabbath afternoons.

My first week as leader was overwhelming. I knew right away that I had a great task ahead of me when the other volunteers from AU sat down, looking to me to manage all sixty kids. There were so many things I wanted to do and change, so many goals, but so little time.

I prayed about the situation and my coleaders, Tammy Hiebert and Candice Hines, and I met to decide what would be the most efficient way to use our time during the ROCK Ministry. We came up with the idea of a "buddy system," where each volunteer would be responsible for picking up and working with the same child every week. The system worked well for our volunteers, as I watched them develop really strong bonds with their Benton Harbor "buddies." I know I developed one of the

most amazing relationships with my buddy, Lashonda.

Lashonda and I both needed each other. She needed me to love her and give her a broader perspective on life, to value her and show her how much God values her. I needed Lashonda to



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show me that there is hope in places like Benton Harbor.

In the beginning, I remember how difficult it was for me to get her to come to the ministry program, and how tight-lipped she was on matters concerning herself. It took perseverance to get her to let me into her life, but I knew the barriers were broken when she started bringing me her report card from school, bringing me little gifts from home, and writing notes expressing herself to me.

One weekend, my roommate, Monique Kendall, and I hosted Lashonda at Andrews. During that

time, I got to know Lashonda a lot better; she told me all her dreams and aspirations, how much she loved the AU campus, and how she hoped to be a student here one day. That Sabbath I took Lashonda to church with me and she loved it. At lunch, we were saying

a few words about things we were thankful to God for, and Lashonda got up and said, “Lord, thank you for Kadene, and for letting me spend the weekend at her school.” I immediately realized how Lashonda’s eyes were now opened to new horizons and the opportunity for something far different from what she was used to in the Benton Harbor projects.

Lashonda is fourteen years old now and, by the grace of God, I will do whatever I can to help her make it to Andrews University.

My experience with the AU out-REACH Ministry this past year has inspired

me to take my career in a new direction. Following graduation, I will be pursuing a joint degree in social work and law, and I hope to eventually devote my time and energy to helping juvenile delinquents and underprivileged kids. Having had an experience like the one I shared with Lashonda drives me toward wanting to make a career of helping these children. I believe if God can use me, He can use anyone—we only have to make ourselves available.

Kadene Miller graduated with a degree in English at this summer’s commencement.