



The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia

Serving Central and South Georgia since 1733

Building Bridges with Youth

Community Youth Connections is the signature ministry of St. Andrew's and St. Cyprian's, Episcopal Churches. This ministry is a combination of three ministries that serve the youth of McIntosh County through tutoring, afterschool care, and Christian youth development..

CYC has intentionally worked to build strong a strong relationship with the Oak Grove Intermediate School. Thomas Barron, the coordinator of CYC, tells us "I have never seen anything like the relationship we have built with this school. Because we've developed such a good relationship, they really view us as part of their support system."



It is through this strong relationship that CYC was able to create a tutoring program. Volunteers from St. Andrew's, St. Cyprian's, and the surrounding community come together every Tuesday and Thursday to go into the school and provide support in reading and math. Barron shares, "I encourage my tutors to build

relationships with their kids and bring their own materials. What really lasts is the relationship they're building with these kids. They get to work with the same kids all year long- and a love of the kids don't have any other supportive adult relationships in their lives"

The success of the tutoring program lead to the creation of the afterschool program, where youth receive healthy snacks, homework help, and a safe environment to play and develop new friendships. Barron states, "The purpose statement is to nourish the body mind and spirit of our students and volunteers," he adds, we start this program with them in the 5th grade

and journey with them all the way through high school. We walk to the school where they're waiting for us, we walk them back to the church, then we feed them, play, and help them with their homework."

The excitement surrounding the afterschool program is what eventually lead to the development of the youth group. he said, "It's our spiritual biblical connection that's missing from the other aspects of our program. Youth group binds them together and gives them that spiritual piece." Youth come together each Sunday to share a meal, participate in a twenty minutes interactive lesson and discussion, and play fun games. Every two years a new group is built out of the kids that currently participate in the after school program. Each group stays together through high school.

Barron said, "By the time the dust settles, we're probably tutoring 30 kind's a ear and then another 30 a year through afterschool and youth group programs, we don't charge anything for these programs either. I think we offer quality programs with quality people. There aren't many programs like this in the county and certainly none that are free. We're starting to see the fruit of how a program like this worked, expanded over 5-10 years."



The youth programs in Darien have been supported through the Campaign for Congregational Development. This initiative is one of the Signature Ministries that falls under the campaign's main priority area of Congregational Growth & Development. To find out more about the Campaign, visit the website campaign.georgiaepiscopal.org