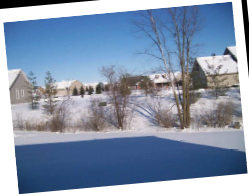


# THOMAS TRIBUNE



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Tim & Sherry Thomas

## That One Day They Would Share the Gospel with Their Children

Over Thanksgiving, northern Illinois Awana missionaries, Bruce & Marti Brumfield visited with us for a few days. We talked about things that missionaries talk about when they're together: our families, the happenings surrounding the churches in our territory, the latest initiative coming down from HQ, new products, support raising, etc.

We also talked about goals – support goals, ministry goals, some self-imposed, some from HQ. After a while, the conversation moved to what are some goals that we could share with the front line Awana leader. We talked about some of the "One Mores" from Larry Fowler's conference workshop. Then Bruce said something that I have not been able to stop thinking about:

**"That one day they [the clubbers] would share the gospel with their children."**

Wow. How simple, yet how profound. What would happen if this became the goal of every Awana leader, in every Awana club, in every church, everywhere? What would happen if this became the goal of every person who works with children? From everyone who changes diapers in the nursery, to every Sunday school teacher, to every youth sponsor, to every parent everywhere - that one day they would share the gospel with their children. Would this add some additional importance to the ministry to children? Would this help a parent decide whether their child should go to Awana or this week's soccer game?

Although my parents never told me so, I know that this is what they wanted for us and I know this is what their parents wanted for them. I also know that this is what we want for our children and for our grandchildren.

I do not claim to have all the answers, but let's try starting here:



### Share the gospel often.

First and foremost we must equip ourselves to share the gospel with clarity and urgency, and then do it. God has called each of us to proclaim the truth of His Gospel and we need to do this as often as we can.

### Build meaningful relationships with the children we serve

You are more than just your signature. We need to see our role as Awana leaders as more than that of a section-signer. Every Awana leader is a minister to children and as a minister; we need to build meaningful relationships with the children we serve. They need to know that we genuinely love them and are concerned about them.

### Help them understand

As we are listening to their sections, challenge them with questions to make certain that they not only know what the verse says - but also understand what it means.

### Engage the parents

We know that a child has a much better chance of becoming a lifelong follower of Jesus Christ if his parents are as well. We also know that we cannot reach

every parent, but why can't we *reach out* to every parent? Make the effort. A friendly conversation before or after club, a phone call to let them know how well their child is doing in club, a card thanking them for allowing you to serve their child can go a long way to getting parents to open up. We can then follow this up with an invitation to attend church with us or perhaps have them over to our house for dinner or dessert and look for an opportunity to share Jesus with them.

### Pray

Lift them up, by name, to the One who created them. Ask God for opportunities to share Jesus with them and show them the love of Christ through you.

Let us make this our prayer for each other throughout 2012 – That we would serve the children and youth that God has placed in our path, in such a manner that one day they would share the gospel with their chil-

## Highs & Lows

### The Year in Review

During this past year, we saw many highs and few lows. To help you understand a year in the life of Awana Missionaries we have prepared a review of the last twelve months. Make yourself comfortable as we do a review of 2011 by the numbers:

#### Highs

One: During the year we presented a Sharing Christ with Kids seminar in Fulton; attended Commander College 201 at Awana HQ; hosted our fifth annual

## FAMILY

Our son David just celebrated his 30th birthday. He was able to spend it visiting with his sister in Washington State. It doesn't seem like it was that long ago that he was a baby. How time flies! David continues to do well at his job as a component engineer for Mitsubishi Power Systems in Orlando, FL. We are thankful the he and his girlfriend Sarah were able to come visit during Labor Day.



in his studies, but finances are a big issue. Please pray that he will be able to find a source of income when he gets back. He has loved getting involved in ministry in a church in Phoenix, and we are grateful that he loves serving the Lord. While in Phoenix, he has been able to catch a Diamondbacks game and hike in the Grand Canyon. He also attended the taping of a nationally televised Christmas special called *Holiday Moments on Ice* with Mannheim Steamroller that was recorded at Grand Canyon University.

Wendy and Evan are doing well in Seattle. Wendy is preparing to leave the Army in April, and may possibly be moving to Colorado. We pray that the Lord will lead her to just the place she needs to do be. We also pray for her as she teaches Evan (who turned three in October) about Jesus. We will miss Wendy – and David – at Christmas time – but we will be able to see them via Skype. Technology is amazing!



The Army let Kyle come home for Christmas. It is so nice to have him here. He is enjoying learning about electronics and repairing things in his school. He heads back to Ft. Lee, Virginia in January. Please pray for him to do well in preparing himself for his Army career and that he will remain strong in his faith. We also pray that he will get a good assignment for a first duty station after his school. He is hoping for Ft. Carson, Colorado, but we'll have to wait and see.



Stephen is coming home from college in Arizona to spend Christmas with us. He has been enjoying it and is doing well

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## HIGHS AND LOWS

24-7 Expo, served at Summit (national Awana high school event) in St Charles, IL; hosted another Sparks Camp at Camp Awana in Fredonia; helped a church restructure their club, preventing them from dropping Awana; spoke at the new T&T Adventure/Challenge Camp at Camp Awana; and taught a new Game Director Boot Camp in Madison

**Three:** Awana Ministry Conferences – Hosting in Milwaukee & Madison and guest teaching more in Minneapolis.

**Four:** Bible Quizzes; new churches in Central City Milwaukee

**Five:** Sparks-a-Rama & AwanaGames

**Seven:** Helped seven churches start new clubs (from which we are already getting positive reports)

**Twelve:** Spoke sixteen times (preach, ministry presentation, special event) at twelve different churches.

**Fourteen:** Helped train fourteen new churches in WI & IL

**Seventeen:** Hosted seventeen On Target Sessions

**Eighteen:** Ministry Team Members that in addition to serving in their own Awana club serve alongside us by ministering to other churches in their area

**Twenty-three:** Visited twenty-three clubs in action

**Thirty-two:** Churches contacted about starting Awana

**Countless:** Hours spent along with our entire WI-IL missionary team developing the new U.S. Leader-Based new church training called "Hitting the Mark"

### Lows

**Two:** This year only two churches decided to stop using

Awana (the lowest in the five years we have been serving) **Seventy-Eight:** As the economy continued to struggle, our support level dropped to 78% - an amount too low to sustain a healthy ministry account balance. The highest our support has ever been is 86%. We have relied on successful events, special gifts to balance our ministry expenses and Sherry working a second job as a teacher for our personal expenses. As this year comes to an end we have been on a two month furlough to dedicate our time to raising additional support and eliminating a projected \$5000 shortfall. God has blessed our efforts and we have received special gifts totaling \$2100 towards the deficit and \$150 in additional pledged monthly support.

### 2012 Goal

**100%:** By God's grace, during 2012 we will continue to *serve* and *train* the 115 churches our territory through visits, conferences, On Target Sessions, etc.; *evangelize* communities and families through regional events; and *promote* Awana throughout southern Wisconsin. It is our prayer that in 2012, we will see more churches start Awana and current churches reaching more so that 100% of the 1.3 million children and youth in Wisconsin would come to know, love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, we will be diligent in working to raise the additional \$1850 per month we need to be 100% supported and so Sherry can quit her teaching job and be 100% dedicated to the job God called both of us to, that of Awana Missionary.

None of this would be possible without prayer and financial partners. Would you please pledge to pray for us during 2012? If so, please let us know by sending us a card, letter, or email. Would you also prayerfully consider becoming a financial partner by pledging a monthly or quarterly gift of any amount to help us stay on the field? If so, please visit the support page of website or contact us for more information.

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