

Thomas Tribune

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Tim, Sherry, & Kyle Thomas

Ministry Update

A New **START**

A local Church started a new Awana club this past fall. They have no church facility and worship at a local elementary school. On a typical Sunday morning there are 25-30 Awana-aged children in attendance. After they decided to start they attended every training opportunity possible. They met with us and planned a startup strategy and within eight weeks of their opening night they were ministering to over 90 community children in their Awana Club.

A **NEW** Start

Two churches in our area have recently gone through the loss of a pastor and a church split. Both churches lost key individuals in ministry. Both churches had every reason to drop Awana and no one would have thought less of them if they had. But both churches knew that Awana played a vital role for their church in the area of evangelism and discipleship. Thankfully instead of

dropping both churches called us for help. We were able to go into each church and meet with remaining church and Awana leaders to help them retrain, recruit, restructure, and restart their clubs in hopes that Awana will help revitalize their church.

A New **LIFE**

T.K. was dropped off at another nearby Awana club. No one knew who he was, no one had invited him. There he met Mr. Dan, a T&T leader. Mr. Dan explained Awana and the Start Zone and hoped he would see T.K. again. To Mr. Dan's surprise, TK was there the very next week, and within a few weeks had completed his Start Zone. Mr. Dan explained the Gospel him. He explained how we were all sinners in need of a savior and how Jesus, who would never leave us or forsake us, was that savior. Mr. Dan asked T.K. if he was ready to accept Christ as his personal savior. The young man replied that he was not; so Mr. Dan told him that both

he and Jesus would be there when he was ready and Mr. Dan hoped that he would see T.K. again. A short time later T.K.'s mother was on the phone with Mr. Dan telling him that T.K. was crying uncontrollably and would not be comforted unless he spoke with Mr. Dan. His mom explained that she had just told T.K she and her husband were divorcing and his dad had already moved out of the home. When T.K. got on the phone he asked Mr. Dan if what he had been told about Jesus was true. When Mr. Dan assured him that it was, T.K. said, "Then come over to my house right now, because I need Jesus." Mr. Dan led him to the Lord that very day and the church reached out to his family in hopes of saving their marriage.

For the last two and a half years we have had the pleasure to serve the local churches in southern Wisconsin by promoting and supporting the Awana ministry. We do this to help churches produce clubs like those above; that can produce leaders like Mr. Dan; who can reach children like T.K.

Equipping to Serve

Fifteen commanders from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota came to Baraboo for three days of intense training called Commander College 101. These commanders are now equipped to be better advocates, communicators, leaders, shepherds, and administrators for the children in their clubs and the churches in which they serve. CC101 is only the first step. Awana has developed a CC201 and CC301 so these commanders can continue to advance their effectiveness



Support

We are thankful for one church that has taken us on for support and for several who have increased theirs. But others have also dropped. During our time here as missionaries our support has never gone much over 80% and our account has slipped into the red. Because of this we have launched a 4 step support raising plan. Please see our website for details - www.awanaswi.org

Family Update

2008 was a year of change for every member of the Thomas family. Our youngest Kyle (17) is in school for the first time in his life and will be graduating this year. Let me explain, like our other children Kyle has been homeschooled and this year we have enrolled him in a Christian school for his senior year.



He has adjusted well and enjoys being involved in sports and getting to know his fellow students (all 20 of them). He doesn't enjoy getting up every morning at 6:00 a.m. or the homework. But is thankful that the year is half over. He is uncertain of his post high school plans, but he has talked about the Army and Nicolet Bible Institute as possibilities. He likes snowboarding and goes as often as possible,

Stephen (23) moved up from Florida last July and enrolled at Nicolet Bible Institute. Nicolet is a one-year Bible program that is also associated with Silver Birch Ranch. During the year, which ends in August, students not only take Bible classes but also work as camp staff helping with maintenance, caring for the horses, stocking and managing the canteen, helping in the kitchen, and working at the various camp venues like rock climbing, tubing, sledding, and skiing. He also works in a local church in their children's ministry, and with their middle school group. He has worked with a little deaf boy teaching him Bible verses and helping him fit in — Good thing he studied sign language in school! When he's not in school he lives here with us. It's been nice having him closer to us again. Steve will be home at



the end of camping season in late August, but has a two week break in March. Wendy (25) and Ryan are now parents. I guess that makes us grand parents—wow! Evan Hunter Soltis was born on October 28, 2008. He is now 12 weeks old and weighs 12 lbs. As you can see from the picture he is holding his head



up now. I call this photo the "Where is my grandpa?" If you would like to see more pictures of Evan (and Wendy and Ryan) you can see them on their website soltis.blogspot.com.

Over Christmas they flew back home to Florida. On their way, they got stuck overnight at the airport in Chicago. So we drove down (in a blizzard — how crazy is that!) to visit with them. We were able to spend about 5 hours sitting up all night with them at Midway airport. When we got back home (only 12 hours later) there was so much snow that we could not even get our car to our house. We sent Sherry shopping while Steve, Kyle, and I walked home to start shoveling. Over a foot of snow had fallen. Within an hour the driveway was clear, when the friendly neighborhood snow plow came by to deposit an 18 inch load at the very spot we had just cleared. Oh well, just a day in the life in the land of the frozen chosen.



kallimaphotography

Wendy is back to work taking X-rays and learning MRI's and Ryan is scheduled to graduate in August with a de-

gree in civil engineering. Evan was featured in their local paper in a story on the expansion of day care services at Fort Lewis. They are planning a trip to see us in May.

Our oldest son Dave is 27 - I cannot believe that he is 27 years old. It seems like only a little while ago that we were brining him home from the hospital. Dave graduated from the University of Central Florida last May with his bachelors degree in engineering technology and is the only Thomas still in Florida. He got a new job with a firm in Daytona Beach and moved up their last fall. He recently survived a major downsizing at his company and looks forward to the additional responsibilities that lay ahead for him. He also hopes to visit us



this summer. Here you can see him visiting with Evan last Christmas.

Sherry is now working, teaching 7th & 8th grade English, History, Science, and American Sign Language for 9-12 at the school where Kyle attends. She is also co-commander of Awana at our church, and leads the high school Journey Bible study. And of course is still able to keep up with the responsibilities we have in our Awana ministry for southern Wisconsin.

Me — I am very busy trying to complete several Awana handbooks in the next few months so that Sherry, Kyle, and I can receive our Citation Awards together from Art Rorheim this April at Summit in North Carolina.

We are anxious to see what God has for us in 2009.

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