

THOMAS TRIBUNE

Summer 2011



Tim & Sherry Thomas

NEW U.S. MINISTRY STRATEGY

Recently,

- India has started over 2,000 new clubs!
- Nepal has grown from 200 to over 1,000 clubs!
- Philippines and Indonesia have increased over 100%
- Kenya 50 clubs to over 700 clubs
- Zambia has grown over 800%
- In Africa the number of kids reached has grown exponentially from just under 40,000 to over 220,000!

So what changed? What has caused this exponential growth internationally?

In addition to the obvious "It's a God thing" answer, it's a new international strategy called *Leader Based* (LB) What is Leader-Based? In contrast to the traditional method the Leader-Based strategy does not promote the sale of products, but instead emphasizes high-quality leader training to accomplish the same goals. Products are still available and churches are welcome to purchase them. But they can still have Awana without them.

With this level of success internationally the leadership of Awana asked itself, "Would this work in America?" In order to find out, the Awana missionaries in Wisconsin and Illinois volunteered to pilot a version of LB for the U.S. With this new approach a church would not be able to start Awana until a small cadre from that church is sufficiently trained to, not only start a club in their church but to, train their own leadership as well. Trainees would leave this "super" training, with a training kit, a game kit, and a starter-pack of curriculum for the clubs they intend on starting.

For the past six months we have been working on developing the training system (currently called "Hitting the Mark") and the startup process for new Wisconsin and Illinois churches for the coming club year. This training will be rolled out in the WI-IL area starting in September. Please pray for the WI-IL team and for the churches that will be using this new USLB strategy.

GOD IS OPENING DOORS

For the last three-plus years we have been working on a ministry effort of presenting the Awana ministry tools and training to churches - many greatly under-resourced - in the central city of Milwaukee. Urban churches face the same challenges many churches throughout Wisconsin face: leadership recruitment, funding, getting the attention of children and youth in the face of an increasing world culture and so on. The difference - the part that crushes people - is that in urban Milwaukee, it would seem the sheer volume of negativity is simply greater, especially in comparison to the number of people facing the problems. We hope that we can be used of God



in His effort to "snatch some from the fire" (Jude 23) as it were, and see them saved by a loving God who gave His one and only Son for them all.

There are almost 600,000 people living in Milwaukee, 170,000 of them under the age of 18. North side residents are far less likely to own a car. Average family income is only about 65% of the rest of the city and Milwaukee has the second lowest graduation rate for minorities in the United States. Violence, gang activity, and depression are rampant. Truly the need is great!

Currently there only six churches within the Milwaukee city limits using Awana. But after many years of working, doors are starting to open. In the last three weeks alone we have presented Awana to over eight central city churches resulting in one new registration and at least two more intending to start this fall. **Cont. next page**

A BUSY FALL

We are currently preparing for several major events coming this fall.

First up is our annual Awana Ministry Conference. Conference is the largest single event we host each year. It involves 2 locations; 500 Awana leaders and pastors; dozens of volunteers; almost 100 workshops. This year's theme is "One More" and is will be held in Milwaukee on October 1st and Madison on the 15th.



A fun and exciting Game Time is vital to the success of any Awana club. Yet many clubs struggle needlessly in this area. In order to help re-energize our clubs' game times we are offering, for the first time in Wisconsin - Game Director Boot Camp also in two locations - Racine

on October 22nd and Madison on November 5th.

Another first for us is coming October 29th. We're calling it Adventure Camp (grades 3 & 4) and Challenge Camp (grades 5 & 6). Adventure and Challenge Camp are additional opportunities for T&T age clubbers to enjoy beautiful Camp Awana in Fredonia. The camps are being offered by Camp Awana Honors Camp, the same organization that hosts a week-long camp in June for Jr. & Sr. High students.

After this we're off to Missouri for Kyle's graduation from Army Basic Training.

SEASONS OF CHANGE

In June, right after Sparks Camp we took an unexpected trip to Atlanta. Our sister-in-law (Tim's brother Larry's wife) Karen was tragically killed a car accident. It was such a difficult time for all the family. It was the first time in many years that all of Tim's siblings had been together. We just wish it were under different circumstances. We were able to stay for awhile after the funeral, and spend some time with Larry and would ask you to continue to pray for the family as they adjust to her being gone. She is with the Lord, but we all still miss her.



L-R Larry, Tim, Bob, & Beth



We are so grateful for the family that God has given us. In April, our daughter Wendy and our grandson Evan were here from Washington for a visit. It was very special to be with them for Easter. August is building up to be a very busy month. We are looking forward to spending a week with our oldest son David, from Florida. He arrives on the 24th.



On the 21st, our Stephen is headed off to Grand Canyon University in Arizona. And on the 28th, Kyle leaves for Army Basic Training at Ft. Leonard Wood, MO. If you have been following all of this, by September our kids will be in Washington State, Florida, Arizona, and Missouri. Please pray for all of them in their endeavors and for us as our nest empties out.

Sherry also returns to teaching this month. Anyone who teaches knows that teaching is time consuming – your day isn't over at the end of the school day. So while she enjoys it, she finds it challenging to keep up with all of her responsibilities (school, Awana, church, and home).

OPEN DOORS CONT.

Training, using the new "Hitting the Mark" system, is scheduled for September 8th-10th in Milwaukee.

When you think of Milwaukee, please pray for our efforts with a little extra fervency - we'd appreciate it and so would those being served! We trust you are excited as we are with this update as we seek to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to Wisconsin's largest city!

Perhaps you feel God leading you to get involved. Here are some ways you can help: 1) Pray! Pray that where division has existed for whatever reason, there will be reconciliation and unity. Pray that the works of His faithful in Milwaukee will glorify Him all the more. Pray for many to have their hearts prepared to receive His good news by His Holy Spirit! 2) Give Financially! The need is great and some of the churches who would like to have Awana feel like they can't afford it. 3) Give Time! We would love to have some pastors and Awana leaders develop one-on-one relationships with a church in the city and its leadership. Your ability to teach them how to use the ministry tools that have blessed your children, families and community will benefit them greatly!

Please contact us for more information.