

## Reflections on the summer at Youth Institute:

When we started out all we had was a vision. I knew my son and his close running buddies needed a safe place to happen. One to keep them out of trouble, and two to serve as a resource for further development in those things young people need to be prepared for life. Outside that handful of young men I didn't know if we could draw many others to our program. As it turned out, over 70 youth came through our doors. And consequently it turned out my son and his buddies were of the group that took minimal advantage of what we had to offer. Go figure. It proved to me that my son was just a tool God used to get me to reach out to the entire community of youth.



As I mentioned we had over 70 youth come through our program, approximately 55 of those 70 actually registered, and around 30 of the 70 were regulars. Out of the 30 there has developed a core group of about 13 young people that I have taken under my wings to work with and develop into future leaders of Youth Institute. We wrapped up our 1<sup>st</sup> summer programming with our End of Summer/Back to School Celebration last Saturday night August 15<sup>th</sup>. We had a great turn out and most of the youth and their family were in attendance.

Youth Institute (YI) began its summer program June 15<sup>th</sup> in the old Securing Your Future's building. The sign now reads Youth Institute "where youth thrive" 4208 Frazier Pike. There was in excess of 70 youth from our community who came through the doors of YI this summer and over 2000 meals served during its duration which ended July 31<sup>st</sup>. Youth were fed breakfast and lunch five days a week with 2 hours of programming and activities between 10am and 12pm and another 1 to 2 hours after. On Tuesdays an opportunity to sing in the YI choir was made available under the direction of Ms. Lavern Wallace.

Throughout the summer YI had many visiting lecturers and presenters from across the city and from other states. Mostly through private donations we were able to purchase a number of games and instruments to keep the youth engaged as well as outdoor activities to help with physical fitness. We were also donated computers, tv's, projectors and more that the youth were able to take advantage of. Lots of work was involved, I owe a lot of the credit to my two volunteers from Apple Blossom; 19 year old Tyron and 18 year old Jordan for their commitment and support the entire summer. Also I would like to thank all of our financial supporters, our friends and parents who stopped by to lend a hand, and the Progressive League of College Station for allowing us use of their building.

Where do we go from here? Glad you asked. First please keep up with us at our website and on Facebook. Our goal is to have after school and out of school programming year round. Children will enter our program at 6 yrs. of age and exit at 18. That's a 12 year commitment. Our success will depend largely on the partnership between Youth Institute and the parents. Youth Institute will serve as an extension of the home to provide a safe place for training and fun for an entire community of youth as they grow and develop. To read more about the goals and purpose of Youth Institute as well as how you can be apart, please visit our website.

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