

Urban Connections

Connecting with Christ... Connecting with People.

Spotlights

Time Need

We are in need of some people who can lend a hand on Monday evenings from 4:45-6:45pm. People willing to work with our pre-k to 2nd graders can email Cathy for details on how to get started.

THANK YOU

To the many people who have given in the recent months, thank you. We can't acknowledge you by name, but we thank you for your generosity.

Summer Missions?

Do you have a team willing to serve? Consider a mission trip to Urban Connections in Columbus, Ohio. A week in June can be spent with youth and families in our urban neighborhood. Your team can join with us for urban ministry training and also serve the neighborhood with day camps that will include outreach, tutoring, daily outings and relationship building. Housing and meals can be provided. Contact Cathy Alexander at (614)252-3726 or at cathy@urban-connections.org for more information.

Material Needs

Consider purchasing something off the list to donate to help our mealtimes go more smoothly.

Wal-mart or Kroger gift cards
Ranch salad dressing
Hot Sauce
Kool-Aid
dishwasher detergent
spaghetti sauce

Challenge



Teens have been telling us "music is just music". For a technology-based generation that might want to have their headphones surgically implanted, I don't believe for one minute that music is just music. Music quite literally gets in your head. Christian radio stations know this, and they bank on it. They promote themselves by pushing the fact that listening to their station will help you focus on God. If "family friendly radio" is what you're listening to, they want you to believe that they reinforce your values, encourage you to focus on God and others, and help you to make right choices. If that's all true, then music holds a lot of power.

We as youth leaders must ask ourselves what our teens are listening to. In our case the teens are listening to secular hip-hop. Adults talk about this genre as an awful, blaring headache waiting to happen. But I get the draw. Hip-hop speaks to this generation. The beat can be amazing, the music makes the youth want to dance. The youth feel like this is music that "gets them". It speaks to who they are and what they experience. It

makes me laugh to think that this is how another generation felt when Rock-n-Roll came about and parents were berating the evils of Elvis.

I'm not familiar with all the music our students listen to, but I try to do my homework. I read the lyrics and I listen to some of the new releases. Sometimes I'm disgusted, but I'm not really surprised when I hear a song about violence, law-breaking, or even treating women horribly. Let me type you a few lines from a new song.

Take a breath, take it deep / Calm yourself, he says to me / If you play, you play for keeps / Take a gun, and count to three / I'm sweating now, moving slow / No time to think, my turn to go
And you can see my heart beating / You can see it through my chest / And I'm terrified but I'm not leaving / Know that I must pass this test / So just pull the trigger
As my life flashes before my eyes / I'm wondering will I ever see another sunrise? / So many won't get the chance to say goodbye / But it's too late to think of the value of my life

(Rihanna, "Russian Roulette," *Rated-R*, 2009)

I've heard a lot of hip-hop, but this song stuck out to me. This song ends with a gasp for breath and a gunshot. If this song plays on a student's iPod just 2 times a day, then they are memorizing every word, "feeling" the beat, knowing the music. I listened to it just once, and the music was stuck in my head. Even now as I type the words two weeks later, the music comes to mind as soon as I read the lyrics. If our teens are wrong, and music is not just music, then what is this song putting in their heads?

Every song has a message. What I hear in this song is a lack of self-worth. I hear that there is no value to life. I hear pain and desperation. What do we do to counteract what this song puts in our heads? The thought that any of our students could play Russian

roulette tonight terrifies me. If music is *not* just music, then we need to figure out what the message is so that we can respond in truth and love.

We can't let any song be louder than truth. They need to be told, yes, but even more they need to be shown again that we value them, value their future and have vision for their lives.

So our challenge today is to take a hard look at the students in our lives. Don't dismiss their music. Listen to it, look up the lyrics (it's easy, just put the title or artist and the word "lyrics" into any search engine), and talk about it. Don't disengage from them and their culture. We can never override the message if we haven't heard it.

Urban Connections House
251-0140

Doug Hartman, Director
252-1376
doug@urban-connections.org

Cathy Alexander, Development Dir.
252-3726
cathy@urban-connections.org

Burt Manchester, Prog. Coordinator
457-4550 (daytime)
burt@urban-connections.org

Let us Pray:

- for partnerships in the neighborhood, that our efforts with churches, schools and community organizations would bring about change and development in our neighborhood.
- for the grant which could help us expand our KidZone Bible club program. The decision will be awarded mid-February.
- for wintertime participation at KidZone and Teen Night Bible Studies. Pray that we would be patient with kids who have pent-up energy, and that the kids would have safety in getting to the ministry house.
- for our tutors and mentors who spend time with kids on a weekly basis.



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447 Fairwood Avenue
Columbus, OH 43205