

Wednesday Night Programs

Church Reaches Children in Rural Community

Sunday School at First Assembly of God in Spiro, Oklahoma, is much more than a Sunday event. This is a community of 2,200 where families drive 20 minutes west to shop at the nearest Wal-Mart and 25 minutes east to work in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The church built an activity building that reaches more than 300 children and teens each week. The building is part of a complex that includes a fenced playground, Christian education building for children's church and Sunday school as well as a daycare for the community.



Church members arrive at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays to make meals for nearly 200 children. Twelve church vans pick up more than 150 of the children and teens that attend. Kids play video games, air hockey, shoot hoops or play in an indoor playground while waiting to eat. After the meal, the 50 volunteers become teachers.

Over 100 teens gather in the new youth sanctuary built in 2007. They spend time in contemporary worship, interactive games, altar time, and hear the word from one of several youth sponsors. The children, led by Scott Harrison, who joined the staff in 1997, separate into groups by grade and are taken to class to learn the stories throughout the Bible for the first thirty minutes. A new program started by Rashel Maynard takes the children through one Bible story a month. With each different story the children watch a movie, are taught a lesson, learn and recite a memory verse, have a craft linked to the story, and end the month with a night of celebration. This provides children who are normally not raised in church with a fundamental knowledge of basic Bible stories. After the children are finished with class, they then move to their own sanctuary, which is constructed to look like Noah's Ark. While the ministry to the children is taking place, the adults not helping with the children gather in a class taught by Pastor Hill to fellowship and have Bible study.



"The focus is on children," Senior Pastor Robert Hill said. It comes from his belief that the children are the heritage and future of the church. "We wanted to minister to our children. They started inviting their friends, so we expanded," said Hill, 61, First Assembly's pastor for 30 years. "Fifteen years from now, these children are going to be the ones having an impact on the church."