

PROJECT TRANSFORMATION

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Jenny Cheng with proud
student Dorothy Molina

Melanie Pope Intern Report

Project Transformation interns continue to impact the lives not only of the participating children, but also of their families. Melanie Pope, PT site coordinator at Kirkwood UMC, shares how she sees God at work through Project Transformation.

What an amazing God we serve! In our program at Kirkwood, we have two very active brothers who sometimes have trouble following directions. Because of this, I had a meeting one day with their mom. After discussing some ideas of how to better help her boys, we decided to talk to the youngest, Fernando, about our ideas. Fernando listened and then began to speak of the voice on his shoulder that tries to get him to do the wrong thing. Getting excited about the opportunity to further explain this "voice" to him, Fernando and I talked a little about Satan and his evil, but also of God's power over Satan for good. I encouraged him to pray to God when he hears Satan trying to trick him. During our short discussion, Fernando's mom listened carefully with a very puzzled look in her eyes. At the end of the discussion, she asked me whether I thought it would be good for her and her kids to be learning about God together at home!! Of course, I said, "YES!" After talking for a few minutes about how they might learn at home together, they left, and I went home praising God for the ways He moves without our anticipations or attempts. God used Fernando to bring His Name into the discussion. I just stood by and watched God work! The family now has a Bible, a kids' devotional book, and a mother's devotional book, all in Spanish.



Student Spotlight Dorothy Molina

"Dorothy isn't reading anywhere near her expected level. In fact, she barely knows how to read at all," was what a distraught mother told PT intern Marcella Rodriguez and Jenny Cheng, the PT site coordinator. She had just had a conference with her daughter's teacher, and what she learned was both shocking and devastating to her. And so Marcella and Jenny came up with a plan. Every day during the next few weeks Marcella would sit with Dorothy during homework time, monitoring her homework, giving her exercises, and focusing as much of her attention as possible on the child. And it paid off. About a month later, Dorothy came running into the program, smiling broadly and holding a blue ribbon as she proudly announced to us that she had just been named "The Most Improved Student" by her teacher. Her mother later informed us that it was true: the teacher had told the mother herself that Dorothy was not only doing better in school, but was reading as well! The teacher remarked, "Whatever program you have her in, it is doing wonders for her!"

Russell Bowlin '04, '05

PT Alumni Profile

Russell Bowlin is currently completing his undergraduate degree in history at Ouachita Baptist University. After graduation in May, he will return to Project Transformation to serve as House Pastor this summer before he enters seminary in the fall. After seminary, Russell hopes to work as a youth minister. Russell shares what being a Project Transformation intern has meant to him.

Being an intern with Project Transformation the past two summers has given me countless opportunities to grow, learn, lead, and have fun. For me, the most significant thing that Project Transformation presents is an opportunity to step out of my comfort zone and into a life of ministry.

As the summer 2004 Program was beginning, I admitted to my peers that I did not feel comfortable working with children. However, after the first week of the program, the children had changed the way I felt. With a barrage of hugs in the morning and throughout the rest of each day, the children made it clear that I didn't have to do anything amazing, I just had to be there. Seeing smiling faces gleam as they wrapped their arms around my waist let me know that I was doing just fine. It was this love from the children that helped bring me back for a second summer.

Another wonderful thing that interns benefit from are **Friday Experiences**. These three-hour periods on Fridays allow interns to see different types of ministries in the Dallas area. At each Friday Experience, we have a chance to hear about a particular ministry and speak with individuals who are involved in that ministry. Friday Experiences give the interns a chance to see how many different types of ministry there are.

A third benefit of being a Project Transformation intern is the **bond that is formed among the interns**. This past year, 75 young people from across the country gathered in late May to be Project Transformation interns. As the summer began, many of us were perfect strangers, but through working, stressing, worshipping, and recreating, we have formed many close friendships that will continue to have an impact on our lives, even as we leave this place.

Probably the "coolest" thing about Project Transformation is the realization of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. Through fellowship with each other, the guidance of the staff and clergy, and the support of our partner and site churches, **interns are able to see what can happen when Christians work together for a greater good**. I believe Paul's words in the twelfth chapter of Romans do an excellent job of illustrating how Project Transformation functions:

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophecy, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

Everyone who is a part of PT plays an important and very necessary role.

Finally, as interns we have seen the gratitude in the eyes of the parents that we have visited. We have experienced two months of ministry and have witnessed a tremendous amount of growth in ourselves and in the children. We have seen children come to us, so shy that they will not speak, then get comfortable enough to talk your ear off, and cling to an intern for just a moment longer as they left for the final time at the end of summer. This change would be enough of a reward for the interns, but the greater reward lies in seeing how God (and you) will continue to work in the lives of these children, their families, and the Dallas community as a whole.



Project Transformation is about being Family

A message from Rev. Connie Millsap, Pleasant Mound UMC

Each day, the PT children gather as family as they come from different schools to play, share a meal, learn a Bible lesson, express themselves creatively, support one another in school work, and celebrate our successes.

Who doesn't look forward to big family gatherings: the food, the fellowship, the celebrating? Once a month, the Family Fun Night gathering brings together Project Transformation children, their sisters and brothers, moms and dads and the church as the "grandparents" to share a meal together, to develop relationships, and to participate in a family activity. The November Family Fun Night was really special as families gathered to give thanks and to make turkey decorations to take home. In December we created Advent banners and sang carols in English and Spanish. There was a real sense of being one big family.

The church has extended the After School ministry to our "First Saturday" ministry, Lil' Folks C.L.U.B. (Christ Loves Us Best) where we hear the Bible story, have experiential activities, and have lots of fun. We started out with "Its Good to Give Thanks," and studied the Festival of the Booths from Deuteronomy; making our own tents from beach towels and blankets, eating food that would have been eaten such as dates, grapes, olives, unleavened bread (soda crackers), and wine (apple juice). We learned a song giving glory to God, listened to Israeli folk music of Shalom, and learned a Hebrew folk dance to celebrate life. In December, the theme was "God With Us." It was great fun to be blindfolded and to be guided through a Christmas Lane strewn with ornaments and candy canes without stepping on them, and then to act out the Christmas Story from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

In all the activities, the parents come and join right in. All of us are having a lot of fun. **Together we are becoming the family of God, thanks to Project Transformation.**

Executive Director's Note

Eric Lindh



As many of you know, “**transforming communities through relationships**” is a key component of the ministry of Project Transformation. However, this transformation in the lives of the participants may not always seem evident during our interns’ year of service. As I listen to the interns share their joys and challenges, a particular verse comes to mind:

“Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” – Galatians 6:9.

Of course, the fruit of our labor may not always be immediately visible in the lives of the children we serve. However, whether we get the opportunity to see it or not, time spent with a child will ultimately make a difference. During a recent training, our interns were encouraged by Rochelle Moss, a speaker who testified to how her life had changed as a result of mentoring in an after-school program similar to PT. She attributed her confidence, faith, and success to the love she received from dedicated mentors who invested their time with her. In the same way, our interns and volunteers commit much of their time and energy with the children and youth, showing them God’s love, helping with their homework, laughing and playing with them - transforming the children’s lives (as well as their own) through building relationships. Over the course of this school year, each of our interns will have spent a total of over **400 hours** directly working with the children and youth in Project Transformation’s after-school programs! It takes time to build trust and develop relationships, and I know that the interns’ faith and their love for kids gives them the strength to continue in “doing good” in this ministry.

Giving time is one of the most precious gifts a person can give. If you are interested in volunteering your time with PT’s after-school or summer program, please let us know. Whether you volunteer once a week or once a month, your time will be well spent, and a transformation is surely to occur in your own life as well.

PROJECT TRANSFORMATION

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Transforming Communities Through Relationships

Our mission is to connect the energy of young adults, the strength of church-supported institutions, and the untapped resources of underserved neighborhoods to meet the evolving needs of children and youth.

Spotlight on Volunteers

National Charity League



Project Transformation is blessed by the commitment of more than 1,200 volunteers each summer. In addition to individual volunteers, we often have groups that come together to read at the same site. For the past two years, we have been fortunate to have volunteer readers from National Charity League, a mother-daughter service organization whose mission is “commitment to community service, leadership development, and cultural experiences.” After learning about PT’s year-round after-school program, National Charity League approached PT about extending the relationship to include year-round service. Together plans were made for National Charity League to provide dinner, games, and activities for November Family Fun Night at the Oak Cliff PT site.

When the day arrived, a well-organized cadre of mothers and daughters arrived carrying roasted turkeys, cranberry sauce, dressing, and a variety of delicious pies along with an assortment of games and prizes for after-dinner activities. The National Charity League daughters took charge of the games, and parents and children all had a wonderful evening of connecting with others.

Katy Billups, a senior at Ursuline Academy, described her experience at Project Transformation as follows: “This was the first time for me to volunteer for Project Transformation. The kids were terrific. They were so excited to play the games and they had excellent manners. I had a great time. If I had a chance, I would definitely sign up to help with Project Transformation again.”

If you are part of a group, large or small, that would be interested in volunteering with Project Transformation, please call Mary Norsworthy, Volunteer Coordinator, at 214-946-3600.