

W I N T E R CHILDREN'S LEADER 2 0 0 1

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

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Vol. 8, No. 1
Editor: Sharon Wright
Children's Ministries Director:
Noelene Johnsson

A publication of the
North American Division
Children's Ministries Department
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600
(301) 680-6425
www.childmin.com

Family Friendly Churches Focus on Children

Research has confirmed that parents are still the primary influence on children. Parents have the primary responsibility for the nurture of children. But families need help; parents need training and support. Research has also shown that churches that are friendly and supportive of families experience growth. Because they provide the best possible environment for children, kids and their families want to be there.

The Family Friendly Church, a new seminar for pastors, was inaugurated at the first annual Adventist Children's Ministries Association (ACMA) Convention, held January 18-20 in Panama City. The seminars provide tools for assessing a church's family friendliness and offer practical suggestions for improvement. Presenter guides and participant booklets will be available from AdventSource in April. Look for the logo and more information coming soon online at <http://childmin.com>.

The fall 2000 Children's Ministries conventions in Albany and Orlando also featured a new Family Ministries Certification curriculum, now available in English or Spanish. Courses were taught by ministry specialists such as Willie Oliver (director of NAD Family ministries, pictured below), Ron & Karen Flowers, Wilma & Willie Lee. More than 100 people participated in the Family Ministries tracks offered at



the two conventions. For more information about family ministries certification, contact your local conference Family Ministries director or visit <http://family.nadadventist.org>.

"Family Ministries and Children's Ministries complement each other," states Noelene Johnsson, NAD Children's Ministries Director. "Both are interested in the nurture of children. One of the best ways to help a child is to train the parent."



Pokémon: Gotta Catch'em All?

Not for Five boys in Iowa!

The five pre-teen boys in my room were bored with Bible study. They made no secret about it. Bible class simply consisted of reading the assignment, answering the questions at the end, and turning in the assignment. It didn't seem to have any impact on their day-to-day words and actions. They were much more interested in recent movies or Pokémon—especially Pokémon.

I brainstormed with others for ideas, prayed for help, and tried all sorts of different strategies. Finally, one morning in late October, we embarked on the journey that would have a major impact in the lives of my five students. Together we opened a book that sits on the shelf in nearly every Adventist home—a book that most Adventists have never read all the way through.

The Great Controversy started slowly for us in the beginning. We didn't race through the pages or skip the long paragraphs. We looked up hard words we didn't understand. We underlined important passages and wrote key phrases on the sides of the pages. We also memorized Bible texts quoted in each chapter.

In the first few chapters, we were introduced to the struggle between good and evil. We read how men like Luther, Huss, Jerome, and Wesley stood up for the right no matter who or what was against them. We witnessed the thousands who died at the stake because they wouldn't conform to the Catholic Church.

To keep from getting bogged down, we ventured next to the last five chapters. There we studied the time of trouble, and how each one of us will have to make a choice. We journeyed to that place in the future where every person will stand before God and be asked, "What did you do for Me? Did you spend time with Me? Did you stand for the right, though the heavens fall?" These five young boys learned that they are a part of the remnant—the last true church before Christ's second coming.

Then we broke the routine again by turning to the middle of the book. It was a Wednesday in March when we read the words in Chapter 31 that would change everything. I don't suppose that Nathan, Samuel, Caleb, Cody, or Kyle will forget that day.

We had just concluded our study of Chapter 31, when I felt strongly impressed to speak to the boys about Pokémon and its satanic influences. After all, they were hooked on Pokémon. They had the toys, cards, and games; they watched the cartoon daily and did lots of card trading before and after school. They talked Pokémon and lived Pokémon. Yet Pokémon is a total contradiction to the advice and instructions given in Chapters 30 and 31 of *The Great Controversy*.

Our discussion that day lasted for over an hour. These five boys and I were engaged in a

Pokémon is a total contradiction to the advice and instructions given in Chapters 30 and 31 of The Great Controversy.

conversation about the evil influences of Pokémon. We evaluated the game in terms of the principles we'd just read. At the end of class, I encouraged each one of them to think seriously about being involved with the Pokémon game.

As we were walking to the gym for PE, Kyle caught up with me. He turned to me and said matter-of-factly, "Mrs. Gibson, I used to think Pokémon was all right until today."

"What do you think now, Kyle?" I asked.

He said, "You know, it's NOT all right." That's all he said, and in his mind it was settled. Kyle had just begun to collect Pokémon trading cards, but he had made his decision to follow the teachings given in the Bible and *The Great Controversy*. Christ was working in his heart, and Kyle chose to dispose of his few Pokémon cards.

The next day, Nathan's mom approached me after school. "Last night the weirdest thing happened," she said. "After supper, Nathan asked to look at the phone book. I looked at him strangely and asked him why. He said that he learned in Bible class that Pokémon wasn't right and had lots of spiritualism in it, so he wanted to sell all of his games and toys!"

The following Monday, Caleb's mother came to me and said, "I don't know what you're reading in *The Great Controversy*, but you have made an incredible impression upon Caleb. He is selling every one of his Pokémon cards, all of his computer games, and all of his toys. Thank you for your willingness to make a difference in his life—and for allowing him to make this decision on his own."

After she left my classroom, I breathed a prayer of thanks to God for bringing Caleb, already a baptized church member, to this decision. Caleb had felt the gentle nudge of

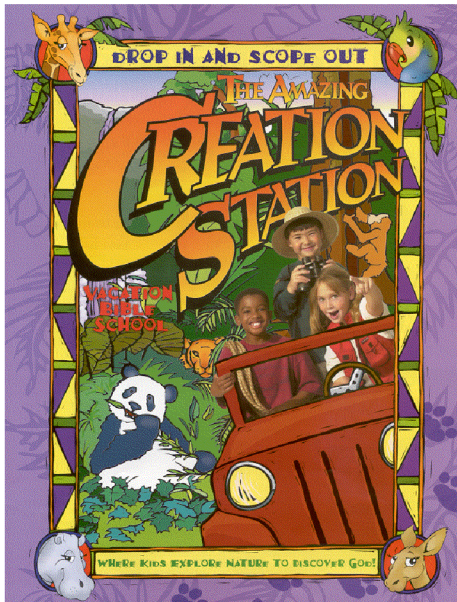
Christ in his heart and was standing up for the right thing. God was working in my classroom and on Caleb's heart. He had heard my prayers!

Samuel, Caleb's best friend, also made the decision to get rid of his cards and games. Samuel was the student I had prayed for the most. You see, he had bought almost every card and did lots of trading. He was completely wrapped up in the game.

His mother said, "The neighbor kids Samuel used to play with were involved in a role-playing game similar to Dungeons and Dragons. Samuel wanted this game and we wouldn't let him buy it. We let Samuel buy Pokémon because we didn't think it was as bad as the other role-playing games. Just last night, Samuel said that he realized why we wouldn't let him buy the other game. He also told me that he wanted to get rid of his Pokémon stuff. He made this decision based upon what he had learned in *The Great Controversy*. He realized that Pokémon wasn't just a game—it was Satan's game."

I couldn't believe it! Samuel, who had over 200 Pokémon cards, had made his decision to do the right thing. I sent up another prayer of thanksgiving to God.

(continued on page 4)



The Amazing Creation Station VBS

It's coming! In response to requests for "something new for Vacation Bible School," editors and designers at the Review & Herald and AdventSource have been scrambling this spring. While you'll recognize a lot of material in *The Amazing Creation Station* (it is adapted from *EarthMaker Mysteries*), the 2001 VBS program has a brand new look and feel. And development of a completely different VBS program for 2002 is currently underway.

To place your orders for *The Amazing Creation Station* VBS kit, contact your local ABC or phone 800-765-6955. **VBS kits will be available by March 15.** For information about training or brochures, check with your conference Children's Ministries director or phone Judi Rogers at Review & Herald Publishing (800-688-0555).

The VBS brochure and order form are also online at www.childmin.com (see VBS).



Carolyn Webbe (Bermuda Conference) and Neal (British Columbia Conference) pray together at the ACMA Convention (see p. 4).

News & Notes

Coming Events

◆ The next NAD Children's Ministries convention will be held in conjunction with the Adventurer Leadership Convention Denver, CO, March 22-25 at the Holiday Inn Denver Southeast. It will feature a full lineup of Children's Ministries certification courses, as well as training for the GraceLink Sabbath School curriculum. More information is available at www.childmin.com (see CONVENTIONS). To register, call Adventist PlusLine at 800-732-7587. Hotel reservations must be made separately.

◆ The Mid-America Union is planning a training convention for September 13-16. Breakout seminars will include Children's Ministries topics as well as other ministry areas. The convention will be held at the DoubleTree Corporate Woods in Overland Park, KS. For more information, visit www.maucsda.org. (Look for the box at the bottom left that says "2001 Ministries Convention.")

Year-End Reporting

Each year, the General Conference department of Children's Ministries collects information from the world divisions about Children's Ministries. Has your church stood up to be counted? There's still time! We want to know about your ministry and outreach programs. For a copy of the information that your local conference needs, go to www.childmin.com (see RESOURCES).

Adventist Children's Ministries Association (ACMA) Goes Online

If you're not a member yet, you're invited to join! For a lifetime membership cost of \$35, you'll get: a year's subscription to *Kids' Ministry Ideas* magazine, access to members-only online resources (including an electronic mailing list and bi-monthly newsletter), coupons and discounts on various Children's Ministries supplies or events, plus a special membership card and pin. To register, call AdventSource today (800-328-0525) or visit www.acma-online.org.

The Story of Jesus for Children

From the makers of the *JESUS* film, *The Story of Jesus for Children* makes it possible for children of all ages to see and understand the true story of Jesus, with real children acting out scenes adapted from the Gospel of Luke. Use this new resource to fill the time before VBS starts, or as a treat in your branch Sabbath School. To find out more about *The Story of Jesus for Children*, call 800-432-1997 or visit www.jesusforchildren.org.

Resource for Parents

Parenting presents a real challenge these days. Do you know any parents in your church who need a time-out? A group of innovative moms in Washington offer their solution. You can find out more about the program or order the *Smart Mom's Baby-sitting Co-Op Handbook* by phoning 888-974-2667 or visiting www.babysittingcoop.com.

Baby Bonds

Make that baby dedication even more meaningful--present new parents with a "Baby Bond" good for three months' free tuition at your local church school. Then don't let them forget that your church has an investment in their child.

GraceLink Training Videos Available

◆ *GRACELINK TRAINING VIDEO*: Available for only \$5.95 from AdventSource, this program includes footage from a demonstration lesson and guides teachers through the process of using the GraceLink curriculum. Order online at www.adventsource.org, or call 800-328-0525 (Cat#021131).

◆ *ACN CROSS-TRAINING*: If you missed the ACN satellite broadcast on September 16, you can order a copy on videotape. With a sparkling new 5-10-15-20 format, this program has segments designed for viewing by the church at large, Board members, and parents/teachers. It explains the philosophy of GraceLink and gives basic information about the coming changes. To order, phone 800-ACN-1119 and press 3.



Stacey Bondurant, Chesapeake Conference Children's Ministries director, models the costume of a woman from Bible times.

(Pokémon, continued from page 2)

Cody was just developing an interest in the game. He didn't have any cards, to my knowledge, but was interested in buying some from the other students. He too has now made the decision not to buy any Pokémon cards.

I can't begin to tell what an impact these boys' decision has had on the other children in the school. The younger children do not talk about it anymore, and they don't trade their cards at school either. Some of the students in other classes have also made the decision to get rid of their Pokémon cards.

I give God all the credit for the original idea to study *The Great Controversy*. I am intensely proud of the decisions that Cody, Caleb, Kyle, Samuel, and Nathan have made—"to stand for the right though the heavens fall." They made this important decision for themselves, using the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy as their guides.

Can I show a direct link between their decision to reject Pokémon and the increased obedience and harmony we experienced in the classroom? No, I can't. But there is a positive change. As these five boys grow in their relationship with Christ, they are making choices and decisions one step at a time. Little by little, God is preparing their hearts. Step by step, they are standing up for the right thing.

So, Pokémon, you think you "gotta catch 'em all"? Well, there are five boys in Iowa who have studied about the underhanded, sneaky spiritualism of this game and have made their decision: they DON'T gotta catch 'em all!

~Gina Gibson
Ryan, IA

Children's Ministries Convention: Panama City, FL

The weekend of January 18-20 brought together children's ministries leaders from around the North American Division for the first annual Adventist Children's Ministries Association (ACMA) convention.

Certification courses for both the Basic and Advanced levels were offered by presenters like Bailey Gillespie, Margaret Taglavore, Steve Case, and Wilma Kirk-Lee. Dick Stenbakken shared the story of his involvement with dramatic Bible character monologues. Terry Johnsson told how he had experienced grace as a dyslexic child labeled for failure.

Judi Rogers unveiled the brand new materials for **The Amazing Creation**

Health Insurance for Children

How many children do you know in your church, school, or community who do not have health insurance? You can find out about your state's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) at www.childrensdefense.org/signthemuphealthy.htm.

- ❖ The number of children enrolled in CHIP has gone from one million in 1998 to 3.3 million in 2000.
- ❖ Almost all states have tried to streamline and simplify their application processes.
- ❖ More than half of all states have set CHIP eligibility guidelines at double the Federal Poverty Level.

Station VBS at the Saturday night Fun Fair. She and her helpers demonstrated that low-cost materials can be used to create an attractive setting which draws kids into learning about their Creator.

The convention concluded Saturday night with singing, games, and a slideshow of pictures from the weekend. You can see the photos and slideshow at www.childmin.com (see CONVENTIONS).

The NAD Ministries Convention was held directly following the ACMA convention. The Children's Ministry Advisory was held on Thursday, January 25. News items from the advisory include:

- ❖ **outstanding service awards** presented to Dr. Patricia Habada and Donna Williams
- ❖ **three new Vacation Bible School programs** planned, to add to the existing series for a 6-year rotation
- ❖ **job description/help packet** for conference Children's Ministries directors currently under development



Convention regulars Tamara Barker and Julie Lyles; Iris Pacheco-Maisonet in the background.

Children's Ministries Department
North American Division
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904

