

CHILDREN'S LEADER

SPRING 2001

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

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National Television Turnoff Week

National TV-Turnoff Week 2001 is scheduled for April 23-29. This annual event, now in its seventh year, has been endorsed by 61 national organizations, 32 state governors, and the U.S. Surgeon General. Public awareness of National TV-Turnoff Week is reaching an all-time high, and organizers hope to outdo last year's record, when six million children and adults turned off their televisions and turned on real life.

There's still time to visit www.tvturnoff.org and view or print fact sheets, browse the catalog of great "TV-FREE" products, read the latest edition of *The TV-Free American*, or order an organizer's kit. You can also call 800-939-6737 for more information. (Too late for this year? See page 3.)



Last year, many school officials went to great lengths to demonstrate just how fun and creative being TV-free is. For instance, in Azusa, GA, principal Jon Blickenstaff kissed a chicken when his students made his challenge to be TV-Free for 1,000 hours! And when students in Alameda, CA, reached their TV-Turnoff Week goal, principal Rosemary Holmes and vice principal Judy Goodwin celebrated by arriving at school in style--on Harley-Davidson motorcycles with matching jackets, helmets, T-shirts, jeans, and sunglasses.

One thing National TV-Turnoff Week teaches us is that enjoying real life is incentive enough to turn off the television. Students all across the country commented that they had more fun without TV. A second-grader in New York wrote to the editors of the local *Lewisboro Ledger* (5/4/00): "I had a great time, and my only question is: If this is so great, why don't we turn off the TV for the other 51 weeks of the year?"

It's a good question, and one we should be conscious of throughout the year. TV-Turnoff Week demonstrates that there is no reason not to turn off the TV all year round; in fact, there are many reasons to do so.

~excerpted from *The TV-Free American*

Win Them--or Lose Them

The concept of "win or lose" is an ancient one that led many a ruler into battle. So what is such an idea doing in Children's Ministries in 2001?

It's about saving children, says Gary Hopkins, director of Andrews University's Center for Prevention Research, who spoke to Children's Ministries leaders at the NAD Ministries Convention in January. According to Hopkins, getting adults to learn kids' names at church is a sure-fire way to keep those kids in the church.

Reminiscent of an Old Testament prophet, Hopkins sat on the edge of a table, swinging his legs, as he told a group of Children's Ministries directors, "Your children are at risk. We have more than one study that shows you will lose every child that you see up front for the children's story-- unless the adults make an effort to learn their names. Kids don't keep going back someplace where nobody notices them."

Hopkins admits that he gets tired of being asked back to talk about children at risk when no effort has been made to do anything about what he said two years before.

What can children's leaders do to help churches take this message to heart? Try some of the following:

- ❖ Feature a child or two up front every Sabbath.
- ❖ Interview children at church; ask them to tell their dreams for their church.

Getting adults to learn kids' names at church is a sure-fire way to keep those kids in the church.

- ❖ In small churches, introduce the children to the church. Let them tell how they can help at church.
- ❖ Follow up and get children involved at church.
- ❖ Introduce the adults in the church to the children.
- ❖ Encourage the children to greet the adults by name.

- ❖ Get adults to pray for children by name.
- ❖ Occasionally ask children to tell what they like about particular adult members.
- ❖ Seek out friendly acts by adults and follow up with thank-you notes.
- ❖ Encourage all adults--the pastor included--to fill out volunteer clearance forms. This is the first step to creating a safe environment for children.

~Noelene Johnsson



Members of the Mile High Academy Elementary Ringers

Highlights from Denver

More than 250 Children's Ministries and Adventurer leaders gathered at the Holiday Inn Denver Southeast for a Division-wide training event March 23-25.

The Rocky Mountain Conference hosted the event, and RMC staff members decorated the meeting area to illustrate the weekend's theme: "Reaching out to All God's Children." Four Children's Ministries seminar tracks were offered, as well as four for Adventurer Staff Training--that's a total of 88 breakout sessions and five general sessions!

Several new Children's Ministries presenters were featured at the Denver convention. Sharon Chaffee, of Yucaipa, CA, presented breakout sessions on Teaching from Nature, Crafts that Teach, Drama Ministries, and Understanding Junior-Teens. Vickie Brown of the Southwest Region Conference was one of several real "minute-people"--she taught Children's Outreach and Interactive Storytelling. Pastor Terry Buxton traveled to Denver from the Concord Baptist Church in Dallas, TX to present seminars such as

The Year 2000: Children's Ministries Overview

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Conference year-end reports	5 (9%)	13 (22%)
Conferences reporting VBS	15 (26%)	18 (31%)
Vacation Bible Schools held	265	272
Enrollment	10,590	11,566
Percent non-Adventist children	56%	51%
Branch Sabbath Schools	15	182
Leadership training meetings	25	153
Baptisms resulting from children's outreach	18	141
On-going Bible study classes	44	138
Children witnessing	160	1,686
Congregations with other weekly programs for children	786	830

The above table reflects all the information received to date, from 18 out of the 58 conferences which comprise the North American Division. 2001 Year-end report forms and VBS report forms are available at www.childmin.com.

News & Notes

Coming Events

◆ The Mid-America Union is planning a training convention for **September 13-16, 2001**. 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.")

◆ **April 24-27, 2002**--North American Division *Festival of the Laity* will be held in Orlando, FL. One track of Children's Ministries seminars will be offered, featuring Steve Case. For more information, visit www.plusline.org/events/events14.htm or phone 301-680-6430.

◆ The only NAD-sponsored Children's Ministries training convention scheduled for 2002 will be held **September 12-15**, in Charlotte, NC. Watch our website (www.childmin.com) for details.

Resources for the Family-Friendly Church

The Family-Powered Church, by Pamela J. Erwin (Group Publishing, 2000). This comprehensive guide recognizes that each church and its families are unique. So it provides a variety of clear and practical tips on building strong family foundations; connecting families; and building a happier, healthier, and more effective church.

Family Friendly Ideas Your Church Can Do: 50 Ways to Involve Families (Group Publishing, 1998). Explore this resource for family-oriented learning activities, worship experiences, service projects, enrichment activities, and just fun times.

The Family-Friendly Church, by Ben Freudenburg with Rick Lawrence (Group Publishing). Discover how certain programming can often short-circuit a church's ability to truly strengthen families--and what to do about it.

National TV-Turnoff: Planning for 2002

Here's a challenge for your church--even if you don't do a TV-Turnoff Week next week (sorry for the short notice!), you can do a similar event anytime, or start planning now for next year. Show the folks in your community how to encourage creativity and healthy choices!

- ❖ Gather support from your church board and local home & school associations.
- ❖ Recruit community sponsors to donate gifts or prizes.
- ❖ Visit www.tvturnoff.org for fact sheets and promotional items.

We'd like to hear your stories and ideas for making TV-Turnoff a reality in your church and community. Please e-mail them to wrigsh@nadadventist.org.



TV-Turnoff Tips

- ◆ Move your television to a less prominent location.
- ◆ Keep the TV off during meals.
- ◆ Designate certain days of the week as TV-free days.
- ◆ Do not use television as a reward.
- ◆ Listen to music or the radio for background noise.
- ◆ Cancel your cable subscription and use the money for books.
- ◆ Don't worry if children claim to be bored. Boredom passes and often leads to creativity.

~TV-Turnoff Network

Sharon Chaffee demonstrates an idea for "Crafts that Teach."



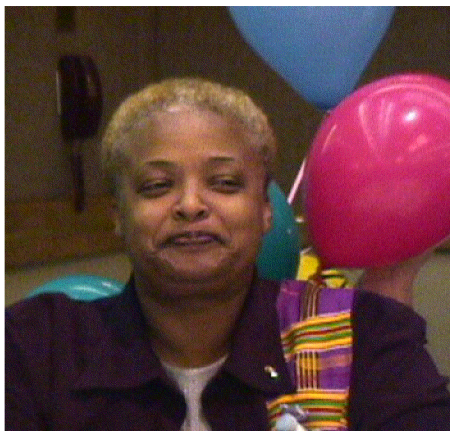
Connecting with Today's Kids and Creative Teaching Techniques.

Joe and Julie Savino led song services throughout the weekend. The Mile High Academy Elementary Bell Choir provided an additional musical highlight, with nearly 30 elementary-age ringers.

What People Said. . .

Comments from participants were enthusiastic: "I have never been to a better convention." "We should have these twice a year!" "Please encourage pastors (even of small churches) that this is an important event to attend!" "Thanks for the state-of-the-art presentations by people who are authorities in their fields."

When asked about certification on their convention evaluations, 77 percent of Children's Ministries respondents indicated that they were working to complete ministry certification. The NAD Children's Ministries department has received inquiries from all over the world about its ministry certification program. (Information can be found in the Certification section of www.childmin.com.)



Above: Wilma SAYS she enjoys these conventions! Right: In one seminar, participants were challenged to build a "Tower of Babel" from toothpicks, marshmallows, and gumballs, without communicating verbally.

Dealing with Harry Potter: Fight or Flight?

The *Harry Potter* series of books, written by British librarian J.K. Rowling, is now in its fifth year, with a total of seven books planned. The books tell the story of Harry, an orphan boy who is being raised by the Dursleys, a stuffy, uncaring aunt and uncle and their bullying son, Dudley. All of the Dursleys dislike Harry--especially when he finds out that his mother and father were a witch and a wizard. Over their strenuous objections, Harry attends the Hogwarts school for young witches and wizards, and finds himself an unwitting participant in a battle between good and evil.

By now, most Adventist parents, teachers, and children's ministries leaders have heard about Harry Potter. But what have you heard? What tools do you and your children have for making decisions about whether or not it's okay to read these books?

"The most important thing to remember is that parents MUST be involved in this issue with their children." (Richard Abanes, *Harry Potter and the Bible*) These stories were never intended for children under age 7. If your child must read the books, be sure to read them to him/her. Stop and discuss what you are reading. Ask, "Is this glorifying Jesus, or the other guy?"

Author Sally Pierson Dillon offers the following recommendations for parents or leaders who face decisions about these books:

◆ **Remember who the enemy is, and who the enemy ISN'T:** Harry Potter is NOT the enemy. The kids reading Harry Potter are NOT the enemy! J.K. Rowling is NOT the enemy. Satan is the enemy. (See Ephesians 6:12)

◆ **Know who is at risk:** Young people who are curious, dissatisfied, bereaved, psychically inclined, rebellious, credulous, or even conformists can be at risk from reading this material. Children whose parents are in conflict, or who are in circumstances where they feel powerless may be strongly attracted to the Harry Potter books.

◆ **Get your facts straight:** *Harry Potter* is NOT a "Satanist" book or one that teaches witchcraft. *Harry Potter* IS a book that glamorizes the supernatural. (Many other widely sold books--past and present--do this as well.)

◆ **Don't be intimidated by the occult:** "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4, NIV)

◆ **Put on your armor** before studying about these issues, so as to make an informed decision: "Stand firm. Put the belt of truth

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around your waist. Put the armor of godliness on your chest. Wear on your feet what will prepare you to tell the good news of peace. Also pick up the shield of faith. With it you can put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Put on the helmet of salvation and take the sword of the Holy Spirit." (Ephesians 6:15-18, NIV)

~Sally Pierson Dillon

Quotes and Related Books/Articles

Look for a feature article about the Harry Potter books by Sally Pierson Dillon coming soon in the Adventist Review (see www.adventistreview.com).

"We make people weak when we make all their choices for them. This making of decisions by authorities is more an issue of control than freedom. The gospel gives us the freedom to make our own choices. It is time for us to teach students how to make informed decisions for themselves. They will be stronger for it."

~Anita Oliver

Journal of Adventist Education

"Rowling's series is a *Book of Virtues* with a preadolescent funny bone. Amid the laugh-out-loud scenes are wonderful examples of compassion, loyalty, courage, friendship, and even self-sacrifice. No wonder young readers want to be like these believable characters."

~*Christianity Today*, January 10, 2000

www.christianitytoday.com

Reader's Digest recently pointed out, in a response to a letter from a reader, that a number of purported quotes from J.K. Rowling and readers of the Harry Potter books may be traced to www.theonion.com, a satirical "news" site. Remember to check whether a source is fact or satire before taking it seriously.

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