

HealthWorks

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Show Me Health - St. Louis

~by Steve J. Veres, NAD/ACS Health Program



While business meetings and preaching were occupying the attendees on the inside of the Super Dome, "Show Me Health" was taking the ministry of healing to the people on the streets. Over 200 volunteers and twenty Adventist outreach ministries spent twelve days ministering to the people of St. Louis during the General Conference Session. During this event various Adventist departments and ministries provided health screening services such as lifestyle factor evaluation, blood pressure screening, height, weight, body mass index, HIV/Aids education, blood sugar level education and stress reduction. NAD Adventist Community Services (ACS) team provided technical and referral services development to community agencies as part of the follow-up services.

The "Show Me Health" program is a partnership between ACS Health, NAD Health Ministries and the Iowa-Missouri, Central States, Michigan and Greater New York Conferences. Other departments (General Conference Youth, and university professors) worked with the main team in providing their programs. Impact St. Louis, GC youth, Canadian Union College, GC public relations and others worked together flawlessly to provide needed community services combined with wholesome entertainment that drove the gospel message home. ACS Departments of the Central States, Greater New York and Michigan Conferences provided mobile screening shuttles and personnel to provide on-the-street health screening during this extended period.



General Conference public relations provided sacred concerts performed by Seventh-day Adventist entertainers as a backdrop in the city parks where our Adventist volunteers ministered. Greater New York Conference's Van Ministry provided thousands of pieces of literature covering the topics of health, community programs and various guides that address spiritual topics. Volunteers passed out thousands of *Signs of the Times* on the streets of St. Louis. Other literature



included *Power to Cope* stress guides, *Stop Smoking*, *Addiction Relief*, *Healthy Cooking* books, *Encounter with God in Prayer* and other spiritual literature.

As a result of the "Show Me Health" program, thousands of St. Louis residents were given a glance of practical Christianity in Christ's name. The six-month preparation and the actual program established a network of community, health, church, and para-church partnerships. These partnerships will continue to provide an infrastructure, mobile health screenings and follow up for local churches in St. Louis to minister to their community on a regular basis.

Adventist Community Network radio interviews, St. Louis American Newspaper and the Concerned Christian Network got the word out with media coverage. A variety of print stories will also provide the people of St. Louis with a view of the humanitarian compassion ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Casting out the Devil of Substance Abuse

NOTHING IS MORE DEVILISH THAN ADDICTION. The needs of the victim are turned against himself so that he feels compelled to do the very things that are destroying him. When Christ first sent out His followers to do missionary work, He told them, “as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand: Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. (Matthew 10:7-8, KJV) The very foundations of our faith recognize substance abuse as a fundamental evil which insinuates a powerful grip on the abuser, requiring divine intervention to successfully overcome. Nowhere is the transforming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ more needed than in our communities and homes where addictions are present.

“Regeneration” is the name of a relatively new ministry that is emerging within the Seventh-day Adventist Church to address the needs of substance abusers and their families. Whether the substance is alcohol, illegal drugs or something else does not matter. The issue is the pattern of addiction and the havoc that it causes in the family and community, as well as the self-destructive behavior of the victim. Regeneration enters into hand-to-hand combat with the addiction and the systems that support that destructive behavior.

Most of you are familiar with the work of Regeneration ministries both as an important part of the mission of the Adventist Church and as a resource for our readers. Perhaps your congregation or a family near to you—maybe your own—needs to connect with this network of local ministries in order to meet needs close at hand. If not, certainly Regeneration can use your support.

Regeneration ministries use the widely known “12-Step” approach to empower addicts to overcome their addictions. This approach started in the secular world when a handful of desperate alcoholics came together to help each other fight back against their alcoholism. Despite its secular background, it clearly recognizes the spiritual dimension to the problem and the spiritual needs of the addict. Regeneration has taken this approach because it has found it congruent with Bible principles and counsel shared with the Adventist Church in the writings of Ellen G. White.

The 12-Step approach recognizes that each individual—no matter how much of their judgment is obscured by psychoactive substances and addictive patterns—is a free moral agent in God’s eyes, and must take steps to free themselves from their addiction. The 12-Step approach also recognizes that this cannot be accomplished without the power of God in the life of the recovering addict. When the power of choice is joined with the transforming grace of God and supported by a caring group of fellow strugglers, then the devil of addiction can be cast out! The testimony of many lives among the Regeneration network makes this clear.



Harold L. Lee is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the eight-state region served by the Columbia Union Conference. This article first appeared in the Columbia Union Visitor, September 1, 2001. It is reprinted here with permission.

This is a ministry of both outreach and nurture. Obviously, the problem of substance abuse is widespread in our society today and exists in almost every community where there is an Adventist congregation. Since our earliest days as a people, we have taken a strong stand against this demon!

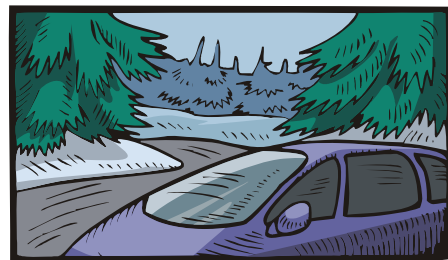
Until recent generations, the American Temperance Society was active in communities across this country led and funded largely by Adventists. We continue to ask each Church member to take a pledge for abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and all other harmful substances. At the same time we would be blind—and contributing to the pattern of addictive behavior—if we were to deny that substance abuse is present in Adventist families.

Regeneration ministry plays an important part in our evangelism, pastoral nurture and humanitarian service. It is not as easy as some of the other ministries of the Church. It does not as readily show results. It is not something that you should get into if you are looking for a program to do for one weekend or one month. It calls for an unusual depth of commitment.

As Christ once observed, “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.” (Mark 9:25) I want to give my affirmation and the thanks of the Church to those who are willing to invest themselves in this often difficult ministry, as well as challenge many more to become involved. The Holy Spirit is calling for Regeneration ministry in our communities, congregations and families. Who will respond to this call? Think about it!

Regeneration Ministries

TOUR UPDATE



A 3rd REGENERATION AWARENESS TOUR is being scheduled for the West Coast in 2006. This Regeneration tour will begin on October 25 in Seattle, Washington and end Sunday, November 13 in San Diego, California. Betty Campbell, the Canadian Representative, would like the tour to include the Vancouver area of British Columbia at the beginning of the tour, if possible, and prayers are being offered so that Canada can be included. Addictions are not limited to the United States and the churches of Canada are requesting for chapters to increase in their territory. Reg Burgess (regburgess@earthlink.net) is coordinating the tour and is working on the details relating to scheduling. Burgess will be a presenter at the awareness events along with Hal Gates, Regeneration Founder/Director; Kimberly Palmer-Washington, singer/songwriter; and Ray Nelson, North American Division Regeneration Coordinator.

The concept of touring began in 2002 (June 28–July 27) when the North American Division Health Ministries Department and its director, Dr. DeWitt Williams, sponsored the first Regeneration Ministries Awareness Tour. Tour organizer, Reg Burgess, Hal Gates, Yolanda Coleman (singer), and Ray Nelson presented their experience, strength, and hope as they shared the joy of being new creatures in Christ Jesus, their highest power. Jesus Christ is able to help people with any and all addictions, compulsive and obsessive behaviors. The purpose of the tour was to create an awareness concerning the possibilities of recovery through Christ-centered 12-Step Recovery. These 12 steps are tools that can be used through sponsorship and group meetings to guide each Christian's spiritual growth.

A second tour was a Midwestern Awareness Tour from New Orleans to Chicago, July 16–August 7, 2004. Presentations were made in nine states by the team of Hal Gates, Ray Nelson, Kimberly Palmer-Washington, Ohio/Pennsylvania Coordinator, Joseph Perricellia and tour organizer, Reg Burgess. (For more information, see the September-October 2004 issue of *HealthWorks*.)

As large and small churches alike greeted the team with gracious hearts and loving arms, they realized the joy the Holy Spirit intended as they uplifted Jesus Christ as the Highest Power. He is able to provide every resource necessary so that “new creatures in Christ” can become all they are capable of being. Freedom from any and all obsessive, compulsive, and addictive behaviors is possible through the Christ-centered 12-Step recovery provided by Regeneration.

The laughter and joy of service with and for Jesus was evident as we traveled in the van usually driven by Reg. Our guardian angels protected us from harm and danger as we covered the many miles on this trip. Near the end of the tour, one of our exhausted travelers even curled up with the luggage for a short rest between appointments.

The personal spiritual benefit and help in our own recovery resulting from our association with each other and our churches will be remembered and treasured from here to eternity. The wonderful, pleasant weather, which was unusual for mid-summer in the Midwest, was indicative of God's great blessing

on our experience in carrying the message of recovery with Jesus Christ our Highest Power.

The first goal of the team was to create awareness of this Christ-centered recovery and prevention network begun by Hal in the mid-1980s. A second goal was to help each local church begin to develop its own Regeneration group with regular meetings each week.

Regeneration Facilitator Training is available for those interested in leading and working with this ministry in their church and community. Check NAD Health Ministries' webpage (<http://www.nadhealthministries.org>) for more information on this and other workshops to be offered at the 2nd Health Summit West, October 5–10, 2005, Portland and the 5th Annual Health Summit: January 29–February 4, 2006 in Orlando, Florida.

“I believe the Adventist Church is not truly aware of the nature of the addictive society we live in,” says Dr. Williams. “Cigarettes are spiked with extra nicotine, gambling is advertised by state governments, foods have taste enhancers, sugars and other chemicals added. The internet pushes pornography while cable television increases the viewing options. Our members are assaulted with addictive behaviors and are surrounded by an intemperate environment that is hard to resist. Temperance is needed more now than ever before and Regeneration is needed in every Adventist Church to help our youth and reclaim members who are battling these 21st century enticements.”

-by Ray Nelson, NAD Coordinator

How to Start a Regeneration Program

How does one start a Regeneration Program? Ideally, Regeneration begins when two people meet to share their vision concerning this Christ-centered 12-Step ministry. One person offers to meet each week in a sponsor-sponsee relationship. When the core visioning team expands to three or four, they then decide to offer meetings each week at a designated time and place. Next, they present a proposal to their pastor and church board to use a meeting room at the church. Another possibility is to request a meeting room in your local hospital or other public meeting place.

After receiving church approval, plan for a Congregational Awareness Day. This may include a 12-Step Sabbath School Lesson Study, Worship Service (invite your pastor or a guest to preach a Christ-centered recovery sermon), Fellowship Dinner, Workshop on “The 12 Steps,” “How the Program Works” or some related subject. Some churches like to conclude the Sabbath with a Victory Concert.

A “Sample Meeting Format” and other helpful materials are available to help you get started. Meetings to discuss your group’s business can be held just prior to or following your regular meetings. The business meetings will be held as needed (one or more times each month). Regular meeting facilitators, treasurer, secretary, literature person, along with other helpful positions – greeter, hospitality person, telephone chairperson, professionals and institutions coordinator, public information coordinator are selected at these meetings. These individuals are “trusted servants” who will rotate (six months, one year, two years) their responsibilities as best provides for the on-going needs of the group as revealed through the “group conscience.” Within the group all are equal. No one is there to govern or control, rather all are working together for their common good and recovery through Jesus Christ.

“Special Forces” teams are available to help you plan your Congregational Awareness Day and to start your Regeneration Group.

Annual Celebrations of Family Recovery will prove helpful for your group and others in your area as you work together and plan for a weekend of recovery related activities. Contact the Association of Adventist Parents and/or North American Regeneration Network Coordinator for help in planning these events.

For more information, contact Ray Nelson by telephone (301-290-1634) or e-mail him at nelsray@juno.com.

Lifelines

RADIO SPOTS AVAILABLE

“Lifelines,” a public service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, provides practical answers to common health questions. This resource, which contains 52 sixty-second spots, is now in its sixth edition. Created to serve as an informative public service announcement about health, (an area Adventists know well, and wish to be known for, “Lifelines” has already been circulated to 1,000 radio stations throughout North America.

“Lifelines” is hosted by Dr. Elmar P. Sakala, MD, MPH, an expert in lifestyle education. Sakala was also speaker and writer for the nationally syndicated public service radio program, “Got a Minute for your Health,” which aired on 7000 radio stations in the United States as well as stations in Canada, Singapore and the Caribbean.

“As a public service, ‘Lifelines’ helps identify Adventists as the people who enhance quality of life in communities,” said Fred Kinsey, assistant to the president for communication for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

At the conclusion of each spot, listeners are directed to call the *Vibrant Life* office or visit their website. *Vibrant Life*’s office will answer any questions and send them a free copy of the magazine that includes more health tips.

The name “Lifelines” comes from the most popular section in *Vibrant Life*, the magazine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Today, *Vibrant Life* can be found on newsstands and in Barnes & Noble bookstores. “Lifelines” is available to local churches, especially those who own radio stations or produce radio programs for community radio stations. For additional free copies of “Lifelines” to share with pastors and members, call the Adventist Media Services Agency at 805-955-7606 (while supplies last).

-by George Johnson, Jr.

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